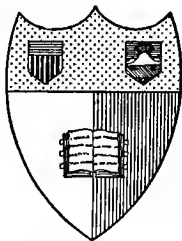


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THE
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TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BLANK VERSE

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BY

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

VOLUME II.



BOSTON
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY
LATE TICKNOR & FIELDS, AND FIELDS, OSGOOD, & CO.

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BOOK XIII.

HE spake, and all within those shadowy halls
Were silent ; all were held in mute delight.

Alcinoüs then took up the word and said : —

“ Since thou hast come, Ulysses, as a guest,
To this high pile and to these brazen rooms, 5

So long a sufferer, thou must not depart
Upon thy homeward way a wanderer still.

And this let me enjoin on each of you

Who in this palace drink at our repasts

The choice red wine, and listen to the bard : 10

Already in a polished chest are laid

Changes of raiment, works of art in gold,

And other gifts, which the Phæacian chiefs

Have destined for our guest ; now let us each

Bestow an ample tripod and a vase, 15

And we in an assembly of the realm
Will see the cost repaid, since otherwise
Great would the burden be that each must bear."

So spake Alcinoüs ; they approved, and sought
Their homes to sleep, but when the child of Dawn, 20
The rosy-fingered Morn, appeared, they came,
All bringing to the ship their gifts of brass
In honor of the guest. The mighty prince
Alcinoüs, going through the ship, bestowed
The whole beneath the benches, that no one 25
Of those who leaned to pull the oar might thence
Meet harm or hindrance. Then they all went back
To the king's palace, and prepared a feast.

The mighty prince Alcinoüs offered up
For them an ox to cloud-compelling Jove, 30
The son of Saturn, ruler over all.
They burned the thighs, and held high festival,
And all was mirth. Divine Demodocus
The bard, whom all men revered, sang to them.
Meantime Ulysses often turned to look 35
At the bright Sun, and longed to see him set,
So eager was the hero to set sail
Upon his homeward way. As when a swain
Awaits his evening meal, for whom all day

Two dark-brown steers have dragged the solid plough 40
Through fallow grounds, and welcome is the hour
Of sunset, calling him to his repast,
And wearily he walks with failing knees,
So welcome to Ulysses did the light
Of day go down. Then did he hold discourse 45
With the Phæacians, lovers of the sea,
And chiefly with Alcinoüs, speaking thus : —

“O monarch most illustrious of thy race,
Alcinoüs, now when ye have duly poured
Wine to the gods, be pleased to send me hence 50
In peace, and fare ye well! All that my heart
Could wish have ye provided bounteously, —
An escort and rich gifts; and may the gods
Bestow their blessing with them! May I meet
My blameless wife again, and find my friends 55
Prosperous! And ye whom I shall leave behind,
Long may ye make the wives of your young years
And children happy! May the gods vouchsafe
To crown with every virtue you and them,
And may no evil light upon your isle!” 60

He spake; the assembly all approved his words,
And bade send forth the stranger on his way,
Who spake so nobly. Then the mighty prince

Alcinoüs turned, and to the herald said : —

“Now mix the wine, Pontonoüs, in a jar, 65
And bear a part to all beneath our roof,
That we with prayers to Father Jupiter
May send the stranger to his native land.”

He spake ; Pontonoüs mingled for the guests
The generous wine, and went with it to each, 70
Who poured it on the ground, from where they sat,
To all the dwellers of the ample heaven ;
And then the great Ulysses, rising up,
Placed the round goblet in Aretè's hands,
And thus bespoke the queen with winged words : — 75

“Farewell, O queen, through the long years, till age
And death, which are the lot of all, shall come.
Now I depart, but mayst thou here, among
Thy people, and the children of thy love,
And King Alcinoüs, lead a happy life !” 80

So spake the high-born chieftain, and withdrew,
And crossed the threshold. King Alcinoüs sent
A herald with him to direct his way
To the fleet ship and border of the deep.
Aretè also sent her servant-maids, — 85
One bearing a fresh cloak and tunic, one
A coffer nobly wrought, and yet a third

Bread and red wine ; and when they reached the ship
Beside the sea, the diligent crew received
Their burdens, and bestowed within the hold 90
The food and drink, but spread upon the deck
And at the stern a mat and linen sheet,
That there Ulysses undisturbed might sleep.
He went on board and silently lay down,
While all the rowers in due order took 95
Their seats upon the benches. Loosing first
The hawser from the perforated rock,
They bent them to their task, and flung the brine
Up from the oar, while on the chieftain's lids
Lighted a sweet and deep and quiet sleep, 100
Most like to death. As, smitten by the lash,
Four harnessed stallions spring on high and dart
Across the plain together ; so the prow
Rose leaping forward, while behind it rolled
A huge dark billow of the roaring sea. 105
Safely and steadily the galley ran,
Nor could a falcon, swiftest of the birds,
Have kept beside it, with such speed it flew,
Bearing a hero who was like the gods
In wisdom, and whose sufferings in the wars 110
And voyages among the furious waves

Were great and many, though he slumbered now
In peace, forgetful of misfortunes past.

Now when that brightest star, the harbinger
Of Morning, daughter of the Dawn, arose, 115
The bark had passed the sea, and reached the isle.

A port there is in Ithaca, the haunt
Of Phorcys, Ancient of the Sea. Steep shores
Stretch inward toward each other, and roll back
The mighty surges which the hoarse winds hurl 120
Against them from the ocean, while within

Ships ride without their hawsers when they once
Have passed the haven's mouth. An olive-tree
With spreading branches at the farther end .
Of that fair haven stands, and overbrows 125

A pleasant shady grotto of the nymphs
Called Naiads. Cups and jars of stone are ranged
Within, and bees lay up their honey there.
There from their spindles wrought of stone the nymphs
Weave their sea-purple robes, which all behold 130
With wonder ; there are ever-flowing springs.

Two are the entrances : one toward the north
By which men enter ; but a holier one
Looks toward the south, nor ever mortal foot
May enter there. By that way pass the gods. 135

They touched the land, for well they knew the spot.
The galley, urged so strongly by the arms
Of those who plied the oar, ran up the beach
Quite half her length. And then the crew came forth
From the good ship, and first they lifted out 140
Ulysses with the linen and rich folds
Of tapestry, and laid him on the sands
In a deep slumber. Then they also took
The presents from the hold, which, as he left
Their isle, the princes of Phæacia gave 145
By counsel of wise Pallas. These they piled
Close to the olive-tree, without the way,
That none, in passing, ere Ulysses woke,
Might do their owner wrong. Then homeward sailed
The crew ; but Neptune, who could not forget 150
The threats which he had uttered long before
Against the godlike chief Ulysses, thus
Sought to explore the will of Jupiter : —
“ O Father Jove ! I shall no more be held
In honor with the gods, since mortal men, 155
The people of Phæacia, though their race
Is of my lineage, do not honor me.
I meant Ulysses should not reach his home
Save with much suffering, though I never thought

To hinder his return, for thou hadst given 160
Thy promise and thy nod that it should be.
Yet these Phæacians, in a gallant bark,
Have borne him o'er the deep, and, while he slept,
Have laid him down in Ithaca, and given
Large gifts, abundant store of brass and gold, 165
And woven work, more than he could have brought
From captured Ilium, if he had returned
Safely, with all his portion of the spoil."

Then cloud-compelling Jupiter replied :
"Earth-shaker, ruler of a mighty realm! 170
What hast thou said? The gods deny thee not
Due honor; perilous it were for them
To show contempt for one who stands in age
And might above them all. But if among
The sons of men be one who puts such trust 175
In his own strength as not to honor thee,
Do as seems good to thee, and as thou wilt."

Promptly the god who shakes the shores replied :
"What thou dost bid me I would do at once,
But that I fear and would avoid thy wrath. 180
I would destroy that fair Phæacian bark
In its return across the misty sea
From bearing home Ulysses, that no more

May the Phæacians lend an escort thus
To wandering men, and I would also cause 185
A lofty mount to rise and hide their town."

Then spake again the Cloud-compeller Jove :
"Thus were it best, my brother : when the crowd
Of citizens already see the ship
Approaching, then transform it to a rock 190
In semblance of a galley, that they all
May gaze in wonder ; thus wilt thou have caused
A lofty mount to stand before their town."

This when the shaker of the shores had heard,
He flew to Scheria, the Phæacian isle, 195
And stood, until that galley, having crossed
The sea, came swiftly scudding. He drew near
And smote it with his open palm, and made
The ship a rock, fast rooted in the bed
Of the deep sea, and then he went his way. 200

Then winged words were spoken in that throng
Of the Phæacians, wielders of long oars,
And far renowned in feats of seamanship.
And, looking on each other, thus they said : —

"Ha ! what has stayed our good ship on the sea ? 205
This moment we beheld her hastening home."

'T was thus they talked, unweeting of the cause.

But then Alcinoüs to the assembly said : —

“Yes! now I call to mind the ancient words
Of prophecy, — my father’s, — who was wont 210
To say that Neptune sorely is displeased
That we should give to every man who comes
Safe escort to his home. In coming times, —
Such was my father’s prophecy, — the god
Would yet destroy a well-appointed bark 215
Of the Phæacians on the misty deep
Returning from an escort, and would cause
A lofty mount to stand before our town.
So prophesied the aged man ; his words
Are here fulfilled. Now do as I appoint, 220
And let us all obey. Henceforth refrain
From bearing to their homes the strangers thrown
Upon our coast ; and let us sacrifice
To Neptune twelve choice bullocks of the herd,
That he may pity us, nor hide our town 225
With a huge mountain from the sight of men.”

He spake, and they were awed and straightway brought
The bullocks for the sacrifice. So prayed
To sovereign Neptune the Phæacian chiefs
And princes, standing round the altar-fires. 230

Now woke the great Ulysses from his sleep

In his own land, and yet he knew it not.
Long had he been away, and Pallas now,
The goddess-child of Jove, had cast a mist
Around him, that he might not yet be known 235
To others, and that she might tell him first
What he should learn ; nor even might his wife,
Nor friends, nor people, know of his return,
Ere he avenged upon the suitor crew
His wrongs, and therefore all things wore to him 240
Another look, — the footways stretching far,
The bights where ships were moored, the towering rocks,
And spreading trees. He rose and stood upright,
And gazed upon his native coast and wept,
And smote his thigh, and said in bitter grief: — 245
“ Ah me ! what region am I in, among
What people ? lawless, cruel, and unjust ?
Or are they hospitable men, who fear
The gods ? And where shall I bestow these goods,
And whither go myself ? Would that they all 250
Were still with the Phæacians, and that I
Had found some other great and mighty king
Kindly to welcome me, and send me back
To my own land. I know not where to place
These treasures, and I must not leave them here, 255

Lest others come and seize them as a spoil.
Nay, these Phæacian chiefs and counsellors
Were not, in all things, either wise or just.
They gave their word to land me on the coast
Of pleasant Ithaca, and have not kept
Their promise. O, may Jove avenge this wrong!
He who protects the suppliant, who beholds
All men with equal eye, and punishes
The guilty. Now will I review my stores
And number them again, that I may see
If those who left me here have taken aught."

Thus having said, he numbered all his gifts, —
Beautiful tripods, caldrons, works of gold,
And gorgeous woven raiment; none of these
Were wanting. Then he pined to see again
His native isle, and slowly paced the beach
Of the loud sea, lamenting bitterly.
There Pallas came to meet him in the shape
Of a young shepherd, delicately formed,
As are the sons of kings. A mantle lay
Upon her shoulder in rich folds; her feet
Shone in their sandals: in her hand she bore
A javelin. As Ulysses saw, his heart
Was glad within him, and he hastened on,

And thus accosted her with winged words : —

280

“Fair youth, who art the first whom I have met
Upon this shore, I bid thee hail, and hope
Thou meetest me with no unkind intent.
Protect what thou beholdest here and me ;

I make my suit to thee as to a god,

285

And come to thy dear knees. And tell, I pray,
That I may know the truth, what land is this?
What people? who the dwellers? may it be
A pleasant isle, or is it but the shore
Of fruitful mainland shelving to the sea?”

290

And then the goddess, blue-eyed Pallas, said : —

“Of simple mind art thou, unless perchance

Thou comest from afar, if thou dost ask

What country this may be. It is not quite

A nameless region ; many know it well

295

Of those who dwell beneath the rising sun,

And those, behind, in Evening’s dusky realm.

Rugged it is, and suited ill to steeds,

Yet barren it is not, though level grounds

Are none within its borders. It is rich

300

In corn and wine, for seasonable rains

And dews refresh its soil. Large flocks of goats

And herds of beeves are pastured here ; all kinds

Of trees are in its forests, and its springs
Are never dry. The fame of Ithaca, 305
Stranger, has travelled to the Trojan coast,
Though that, I hear, lies far away from Greece."

She spake ; Ulysses, the great sufferer,
Rejoiced to be in his own land, whose name
Pallas, the child of ægis-bearing Jove, 310
Had just now uttered. Then with winged words
He spake, but not the truth ; his artful speech
Put that aside, for ever in his breast
The power of shrewd invention was awake : —

"In the broad fields of Crete, that lie far off 315
Beyond the sea, I heard of Ithaca,
To which I now am come with these my goods.
I left as many for my sons and fled,
For I had slain Orsilochus, the fleet
Of foot, the dear son of Idomeneus, 320
Who overcame by swiftness in the race
The foremost runners in the realm of Crete.
He sought to rob me wholly of my share
Of Trojan spoil, for which I had endured
Hardships in war with heroes, and at sea 325
Among the angry waves. The cause was this :
I would not in the siege of Troy submit

To serve his father, but, apart from him,
I led a troop, companions of my own.
The youth returning from the fields I met, 330
And smote him with the spear, — for near the way
I lay in ambush with a single friend.
A night exceeding dark was in the sky;
No human eye beheld, nor did he know
Who took his life. When I had slain him thus 335
With the sharp spear, I hastened to a ship
Of the Phœnicians, and besought their aid,
And gave them large reward, and bade them steer
To Pylos, bearing me, and leave me there,
Or where the Epeians hold the hallowed coast 340
Of Elis. But the force of adverse winds
Drove them unwilling thence; they meant no fraud.
We wandered hither, just at night we came;
And rowing hard, the seamen brought their ship
Within the port. No word was said of food, 345
Though great our need. All disembarked in haste
And lay upon the shore. Deep was the sleep
That stole upon my weary limbs. The men
Took from the hold my goods, and, bearing them
To where I slumbered on the sand, set sail 350
For populous Sidonia, leaving me

Here quite alone with sorrow in my heart.”

He spake ; the blue-eyed goddess, Pallas, smiled,
And touched the chief caressingly. She seemed
A beautiful and stately woman now,
Such as are skilled in works of rare device,
And thus she said to him in winged words : —

355

“ Full shrewd were he, a master of deceit,
Who should surpass thee in the ways of craft,
Even though he were a god, — thou unabashed
And prompt with shifts, and measureless in wiles !
Thou canst not even in thine own land refrain
From artful figments and misleading words,
As thou hast practised from thy birth. But now
Speak we of other matters, for we both
Are skilled in stratagem. Thou art the first
Of living men in counsel and in speech,
And I am famed for foresight and for craft
Among the immortals. Dost thou not yet know
Pallas Athenè, child of Jove, whose aid
Is present to defend thee in all time
Of peril, and but lately gained for thee
The favor of the whole Phæacian race.
And hither am I come to frame for thee
Wise counsels, and to hide away the stores

360

365

370

375

Given by the opulent Phæacian chiefs
At thy departure. I shall also tell
What thou must yet endure beneath the roof
Of thine own palace, by the will of fate.
Yet bear it bravely, since thou must, nor speak 380
To any man or woman of thyself
And of thy wandering hither, but submit
To many things that grieve thee, silently,
And bear indignities from violent men."

Ulysses, the sagacious, thus rejoined : 385
"O goddess, it is hard for mortal man
To know thee when he meets thee, though his sight
Be of the sharpest, for thou puttest on
At pleasure any form. Yet this I know,
That thou wert kind to me when we, the sons 390
Of Greece, were warring in the realm of Troy.
But when we had o'erthrown the lofty town
Of Priam, and embarked, and when some god
Had scattered the Achæians, after that,
Daughter of Jove, I never saw thee more, — 395
Never perceived thee entering my bark
And guarding me from danger, — but I roamed
Ever from place to place, my heart weighed down
By sorrow, till the gods delivered me,

And till thy counsels in the opulent realm 400
Of the Phæacians brought my courage back, .
And thou thyself didst guide me to the town.
And now in thy great father's name I pray, —
For yet I cannot think that I am come
To pleasant Ithaca, but have been thrown 405
Upon some other coast, and fear that thou
Art jesting with me, and hast spoken thus
But to deceive me, — tell me, is it true
That I am in my own beloved land? ”

And then the goddess, blue-eyed Pallas, said : 410
“ Such ever are thy thoughts, and therefore I
Must not forsake thee in thy need. I know
How prompt thy speech, how quick thy thought, how
shrewd .
Thy judgment. If another man had come
From such long wanderings, he had flown at once 415
Delighted to his children and his wife
In his own home. But thou desirest not
To ask or hear of them till thou hast put
Thy consort to the trial of her truth, —
Her who now sits within thy halls and waits 420
In vain for thee, and in perpetual grief
And weeping wears her nights and days away.

I never doubted — well, in truth, I knew
That thou, with all thy comrades lost, wouldst reach
Thy country, but I dreaded to withstand 425
My father's brother Neptune, who was wroth,
And fiercely wroth, for that thou hadst deprived
His well-beloved son of sight. But now
Attend, and I will show thee Ithaca
By certain tokens ; mark them and believe. 430
The port of Phorcys, Ancient of the Deep,
Is here ; and there the spreading olive-tree,
Just at the haven's head ; and, close beside,
The cool dark grotto, sacred to the nymphs
Called Naiads, — a wide-vaulted cave where once 435
Thou camest oft with chosen hecatombs,
An offering to the nymphs, — and here thou seest
The mountain Neritus with all his woods."

So spake the goddess, and dispersed the mist,
And all the scene appeared. Ulysses saw 440
Well pleased, rejoicing in his own dear land,
And, stooping, kissed the bountiful earth, and raised
His hands, and thus addressed the nymphs in prayer : —

"Nymphs, Naiads, born to Jove, I did not hope
To be with you again. With cheerful prayers 445
I now salute you. We shall bring you soon

Our offerings, as of yore, if graciously
Jove's daughter, huntress-queen, shall grant me yet
To live, and bless my well-beloved son."

And then the goddess, blue-eyed Pallas, said : 450
"Be of good cheer, and let no anxious thought
Disturb thy mind. Let us bestir ourselves
To hide away the treasures thou hast brought
Within this hallowed grot in some recess
Where they may lie in safety ; afterward 455
Will we take counsel what should next be done."

The goddess said these words, and took her way
Into the shadowy cavern, spying out
Its hiding-places ; while Ulysses brought
The treasures thither in his arms, — the gold, 460
The enduring brass, the raiment nobly wrought, —
Which the Phæacians gave him. These they laid
Together in due order ; Pallas then,
The daughter of the Ægis-bearer Jove,
Closed up the opening with a massive rock. 465
Then, sitting by the sacred olive-tree,
They plotted to destroy the haughty crew
Of suitors, and the blue-eyed Pallas said : —

"O nobly born, and versed in many wiles,
Son of Laertes ! now the hour is come 470

To think how thou shalt lay avenging hands
Upon the shameless crew who, in thy house,
For three years past have made themselves its lords,
And wooed thy noble wife and brought her gifts,
While, pining still for thy return, she gave 475
Hopes to each suitor, and by messages
Made promises to all, though cherishing
A different purpose in her secret heart."

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her :
" Ah me, I should have perished utterly, 480
By such an evil fate as overtook
Atrides Agamemnon, in the halls
Of my own palace, but for thee, whose words,
O goddess, have revealed what I should know.
Now counsel me how I may be avenged. 485
Be ever by my side, and strengthen me
With courage, as thou didst when we o'erthrew
The towery crest of Ilium. Would thou wert
Still my ally, as then ! I would engage,
O blue-eyed Pallas, with three hundred foes, 490
If thou, dread goddess, wouldst but counsel me."

And then the blue-eyed Pallas spake again :
" I will be present with thee. When we once
Begin the work, thou shalt not leave my sight ;

And many a haughty suitor with his blood 495
And brains shall stain thy spacious palace floor.
Now will I change thine aspect, so that none
Shall know thee. I will wither thy fair skin,
And it shall hang on crooked limbs; thy locks
Of auburn I will cause to fall away, 500
And round thee fling a cloak which all shall see
With loathing. I will make thy lustrous eyes
Dull to the sight, and thus shalt thou appear
A squalid wretch to all the suitor train,
And to thy wife, and to the son whom thou 505
Didst leave within thy palace. Then at first
Repair thou to the herdsman, him who keeps
Thy swine; for he is loyal, and he loves
Thy son and the discreet Penelope.
There wilt thou find him as he tends his swine, 510
That find their pasturage beside the rock
Of Corax, and by Arethusa's fount.
On nourishing acorns they are fed, and drink
The dark clear water, whence the flesh of swine
Is fattened. There remain, and carefully 515
Inquire of all that thou wouldst know, while I,
Taking my way to Sparta, the abode
Of lovely women, call Telemachus,

Thy son, Ulysses, who hath visited
King Menelaus in his broad domain, 520
To learn if haply thou art living yet."

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her :
"Why didst not thou, to whom all things are known,
Tell him concerning me? Must he too roam
And suffer on the barren deep, and leave 525
To others his estates, to be their spoil?"

And then the blue-eyed goddess spake again :
"Let not that thought distress thee. It was I
Who sent him thither, that he might deserve
The praise of men. No evil meets him there ; 530
But in the halls of Atreus' son he sits,
Safe mid the abounding luxuries. 'T is true
That even now the suitors lie in wait,
In their black ship, to slay him ere he reach
His native land ; but that will hardly be 535
Before the earth shall cover many a one
Of the proud suitors who consume thy wealth."

So Pallas spake, and touched him with her wand,
And caused the blooming skin to shrivel up
On his slow limbs, and the fair hair to fall, 540
And with an old man's wrinkles covered all
His frame, and dimmed his lately glorious eyes.

Another garb she gave, — a squalid vest ;
A ragged, dirty cloak, all stained with smoke ;
And over all the huge hide of a stag, 545
From which the hair was worn. A staff, beside,
She gave, and shabby scrip with many a rent,
Tied with a twisted thong. This said and done,
They parted ; and the goddess flew to seek
Telemachus in Sparta's sacred town. 550

BOOK XIV.

THEN from the haven up the rugged path
Ulysses went among the woody heights.
He sought the spot where Pallas bade him meet
The noble swineherd, who of all that served
The great Ulysses chiefly had in charge 5
To bring the day's supplies. He found him there
Seated beneath the portico, before
His airy lodge, that might be seen from far,
Well built and spacious, standing by itself.
Eumæus, while his lord was far away, 10
Had built it, though not bidden by the queen
Nor old Laertes, with the stones he drew
From quarries thither. Round it he had set
A hedge of thorns, encircling these with stakes
Close set and many, cloven from the heart 15
Of oak. Within that circuit he had made
Twelve sties, beside each other, for the swine
To lie in. Fifty wallowed in each sty,

All females ; there they littered. But the males
Were fewer, and were kept without ; and these 20
The suitor train made fewer every day,
Feeding upon them, for Eumæus sent
Always the best of all his fatling herd.
These numbered twice nine score. Beside them slept
Four mastiffs, which the master swineherd fed, 25
Savage as wolves. Eumæus to his feet
Was fitting sandals, which he carved and shaped
From a stained ox-hide, while the other hinds
Were gone on different errands, — three to drive
The herds of swine, — a fourth was sent to take 30
A fatling to the city, that the crew
Of arrogant suitors, having offered him
In sacrifice, might feast upon his flesh.

The loud-mouthed dogs that saw Ulysses come
Ran toward him, fiercely baying. He sat down 35
At once, through caution, letting fall his staff
Upon the ground, and would have suffered there
Unseemly harm, within his own domain,
But then the swineherd, following with quick steps,
Rushed through the vestibule, and dropped the hide. 40
He chid the dogs and, pelting them with stones,
Drove them asunder, and addressed the king : —

“O aged man, the mastiffs of the lodge
Had almost torn thee, and thou wouldst have cast
Bitter reproach upon me. Other griefs 45
And miseries the gods have made my lot.
Here sorrowfully sitting I lament
A godlike master, and for others tend
His fatling swine; while, haply hungering
For bread, he wanders among alien men 50
In other kingdoms, if indeed he lives
And looks upon the sun. But follow me,
And come into the house, that there, refreshed
With food and wine, old man, thou mayst declare
Whence thou dost come and what thou hast endured.” 55

So the good swineherd spake, and led the way
Into the lodge, and bade his guest sit down,
And laid thick rushes for his seat, and spread
On these a wild goat's shaggy hide to make
A soft and ample couch. Rejoiced to meet 60
So kind a welcome, thus Ulysses spake:—

“May Jupiter and all the deathless gods
Bestow on thee, my host, in recompense
Of this kind welcome, all thy heart's desire!”

And then, Eumæus, thou didst answer thus: 65
“My guest, it were not right to treat with scorn

A stranger, though he were of humbler sort
Than thou, for strangers and the poor are sent
By Jove ; our gifts are small, though gladly given,
As it must ever be with those who serve 70
Young masters, whom they fear. The gods themselves
Prevent, no doubt, the safe return of him
Who loved me much, and would ere this have given
What a kind lord is wont to give his hind, —
A house, a croft, the wife whom he has wooed, 75
Rewarding faithful services which God
Hath prospered, as he here hath prospered mine.
Thus would my master, had he here grown old,
Have recompensed my toils ; but he is dead.
O that the house of Helen, for whose sake 80
So many fell, had perished utterly !
For he went forth at Agamemnon's call,
Honoring the summons, and on Ilium's coast,
Famed for its coursers, fought the sons of Troy.”
He spake, and girt his tunic round his loins, 85
And hastened to the sties in which the herds
Of swine were lying. Thence he took out two
And slaughtered them, and singed them, sliced the flesh,
And fixed it upon spits, and, when the whole
Was roasted, brought and placed it reeking hot, 90

Still on the spits and sprinkled with white meal,
Before Ulysses. Then he mingled wine
Of delicate flavors in a wooden bowl,
And opposite Ulysses sat him down,
And thus with kindly words bespake his guest : — 95

“Feast, stranger, on these porkers. We who serve
May feed on them ; it is the suitor train
That banquet on the fatted swine, — the men
Who neither fear heaven’s anger nor are moved
By pity. The great gods are never pleased 100
With violent deeds ; they honor equity
And justice. Even those who land as foes
And spoilers upon foreign shores, and bear
Away much plunder by the will of Jove,
Returning homeward with their laden barks, 105
Feel, brooding heavily upon their minds,
The fear of vengeance. But these suitors know —
For haply they have heard some god declare —
That he, the king, is dead ; they neither make
Their suit with decency, nor will withdraw 110
To their own homes, but at their ease devour
His substance with large waste, and never spare.
Of all the days and nights which Jupiter
Gives to mankind is none when they require

A single victim only, or but two, 115
For sacrifice, and lavishly they drain
His wine-jars. Once large revenues were his.
No hero on the dark-soiled continent
Nor in the isle of Ithaca possessed
Such wealth as he, nor even twenty men 120
Together. Hear me while I give the amount.
Twelve herds of kine that on the mainland graze
Are his, as many flocks of sheep, of swine
As many droves; as many flocks of goats
Are tended there by strangers, and by hinds, 125
His servants. Here moreover, in the fields
Beyond us, graze eleven numerous flocks
Of goats, attended by his trusty men,
Each one of whom brings daily home a goat,
The finest of the fatlings. I meantime 130
Am keeper of these swine, and from the drove
I choose and to the palace send the best."

So spake the swineherd, while Ulysses ate
The flesh with eager appetite, and drank
The wine in silence, meditating woe 135
To all the suitors. When the meal was o'er,
And he was strengthened by the food, his host
Filled up with wine the cup from which he drank,

And gave it to Ulysses, who, well pleased,
Received it, and with winged words replied : — 140

“What rich and mighty chief was he, my friend,
Of whom thou speakest, and who purchased thee?
Thou sayest that he died to swell the fame
Of Agamemnon. Tell his name, for I
Perchance know somewhat of him. Jupiter 145
And the great gods know whether I have seen
The man, and have some tidings for thy ear;
For I have wandered over many lands.”

And then again the noble swineherd spake :
“O aged man, no wanderer who should bring 150
News of Ulysses e'er would win his wife
And son to heed the tale. For roving men,
In need of hospitality, are prone
To falsehood, and will never speak the truth.
The vagabond who comes to Ithaca 155
Goes straightway to my mistress with his lies.
Kindly she welcomes him, and cherishes
And questions him, while tears abundantly
Fall from her lids, — such tears as women shed
Whose lords have perished in a distant land. 160
Thou too, old man, perchance, couldst readily
Frame a like fable, if some one would give

A change of raiment for thy news, — a cloak
And tunic. But the dogs and fowls of air
Have doubtless fed upon the frame from which 165
The life has passed, and torn from off his bones
The skin, or fishes of the deep have preyed
Upon it, and his bones upon the shore
Lie whelmed in sand. So is he lost to us,
And sorrow is the lot of all his friends, 170
Mine most of all; for nowhere shall I find
So kind a master, though I were to come
Into my father's and my mother's house,
Where I was born and reared. Nor do I pine
So much to look on them with my own eyes, 175
And in my place of birth, as I lament
Ulysses lost. Though he be far away,
Yet must I ever speak, O stranger guest,
His name with reverence, for exceedingly
He loved me and most kindly cared for me; 180
And though he is to be with us no more,
I hold him as an elder brother still."

Ulysses, the great sufferer, thus replied: —
"Since then, my friend, thou dost not say nor think
That he will come again, nor wilt believe 185
My words, I now repeat, but with an oath,

Ulysses will return. Let this reward
Be given for my good news : the very hour
When he once more is in his house, bestow
On me a comely change of raiment, — cloak 190
And tunic, — nor will I accept the gift,
Though great my need, until he comes again.
For as the gates of hell do I detest
The man who, tempted by his poverty,
Deceives with lying words. Now Jupiter 195
Bear witness, and this hospitable board
And hearth of good Ulysses where I sit,
That all which I foretell will come to pass.
This very year Ulysses will return.
He, when this month goes out, and as the next 200
Is entering, will be here in his domain,
To be avenged on those, whoever they be,
That dare insult his wife and noble son.”

And then, Eumæus, thou didst answer thus :
“ Old man, I shall not give thee that reward, 205
For never will Ulysses come again
To his own palace. Drink thy wine in peace,
And let us give our thoughts to other things.
Remind me not of this again ; my heart
Grows heavy in my bosom when I hear 210

My honored master named. But leave the oath
Unsworn, and may Ulysses come, as we
Earnestly wish, — I and Penelope,
And old Laertes, and the godlike youth
Telemachus. And then, again, I bear 215
Perpetual sorrow for Telemachus,
My master's son, to whom the gods had given
A generous growth like that of some young plant,
And who, I hoped, would prove no less in worth
Than his own father, and of' eminent gifts 220
In form and mind. Some god, perchance some man,
Hath caused that mind to lose its equal poise,
And he is gone to Pylos the divine
For tidings of his father. Meanwhile here
The arrogant suitors plan to lie in wait 225
For him as he returns, that utterly
The stock of great Arcesius from our isle
May perish, and its name be heard no more.
Speak we no more of him, be it his fate
To fall or flee; but O, may Saturn's son 230
Protect him with his arm! And now, old man,
Relate, I pray, thy fortunes; tell me true,
That I may know who thou mayst be, and whence
Thou camest, where thy city lies, and who

Thy parents were, what galley landed thee
Upon our coast, and how the mariners
Brought thee to Ithaca, and of what race
They claim to be ; for I may well suppose
Thou hast not come to Ithaca on foot.”

235

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered him :

240

“ I will tell all and truly. Yet if here
Were store of food, and wine for many days,
And we might feast at ease within thy lodge
While others labored, I should hardly end
In a whole year the history of the woes
Which I have borne, and of the many toils
Which it hath pleased the gods to lay on me.

245

“ It is my boast that I am of the race
Who dwell in spacious Crete, a rich man’s son,
Within whose palace many other sons
Were born and reared, the offspring of his wife ;
But me a purchased mother whom he made
His concubine brought forth to him. And yet
Castor Hylacides, from whom I sprang,
Held me in equal favor with the rest ;
And he himself was honored like a god
Among the Cretan people, for his wealth
And for his prosperous life and gallant sons.

250

255

But fate and death o'ertook and bore him down
To Pluto's realm, and his magnanimous sons 260
Divided his large riches, casting lots.
Small was the portion they assigned to me;
They gave a dwelling, but my valor won
A bride, the daughter of a wealthy house, —
For I was not an idler, nor in war 265
A coward; but all that is with the past,
And thou, who seest the stubble now, mayst guess
What was the harvest, ere calamities
Had come so thick upon me. Once did Mars
And Pallas lend me courage, and the power 270
To break through ranks of armed men. Whene'er
I formed an ambush of the bravest chiefs,
And planned destruction to the enemy,
My noble spirit never set the fear
Of death before me; I was ever first 275
To spring upon the foes, and with my spear
To smite them as they turned their steps to flee.
Such was I once in war; to till the fields
I never liked, nor yet the household cares
By which illustrious sons are reared. I loved 280
Ships well appointed, combats, polished spears
And arrows. Things that others hold in dread

Were my delight ; some god inclined to them
My mind, — so true it is that different men
Rejoice in different labors. Ere the sons 285
Of Greece embarked for Troy, I served in war
Nine times as leader against foreign foes,
With troops and galleys under me, and then
I prospered ; from the mass of spoil I chose
The things that pleased me, and obtained by lot 290
Still other treasures. Thus my household grew
In riches, and I was revered and great
Among the Cretans. When all-seeing Jove
Decreed the unhappy voyage to the coast
Of Troy, they made the great Idomeneus 295
And me commanders of the fleet. No power
Had we — the public clamor was so fierce —
To put the charge aside. Nine years we warred, —
We sons of Greece, — and in the tenth laid waste
The city of Priam, and embarked for home. 300
Our fleets were scattered by the gods. For me
Did all-disposing Jupiter ordain
A wretched lot. But one short month I dwelt
Happy among my children, with the wife
Wedded to me in youth, and my large wealth. 305
And then I planned a voyage to the coast

Of Egypt, with a gallant fleet, and men
Of godlike valor. I equipped nine ships,
And quickly came the people to embark.
Six days on shore my comrades banqueted, 310
And many a victim for the sacrifice
And for the feast I gave; the seventh we sailed
From Crete's broad isle before a favoring wind
That blew from the clear north, and easily
We floated on as down a stream. No ship 315
Was harmed upon its way; in health and ease
We sat, the wind and helmsmen guiding us,
And came upon the fifth day to the land
Of Egypt, watered by its noble streams.
I bade my comrades keep beside our ships 320
Upon the strand, and watch them well. I placed
Sentries upon the heights. Yet confident
In their own strength, and rashly giving way
To greed, my comrades ravaged the fair fields
Of the Egyptians, slew them, and bore off 325
Their wives and little ones. The rumor reached
The city soon; the people heard the alarm
And came together. With the early morn
All the great plain was thronged with horse and foot,
And gleamed with brass; while Jove, the Thunderer, sent

A deadly fear into our ranks, where none
Dared face the foe. On every side was death.
The Egyptians hewed down many with the sword,
And some they led away alive to toil
For them in slavery. To my mind there came
A thought, inspired by Jove; yet I could wish
That I had met my fate, and perished there
In Egypt, such have been my sorrows since.
I took the well-wrought helmet from my head,
And from my shoulders dropped the shield, and flung
The javelin from my hand, and went to meet
The monarch in his chariot, clasped his knees
And kissed them. He was moved to pity me,
And spared me. In his car he seated me,
And bore me weeping home. Though many rushed
At me with ashen spears, to thrust me through, —
For furious was their anger, — he forbade.
He feared the wrath of Jove, the stranger's friend
And foe of wrong. Seven years I dwelt among
The Egyptians, and I gathered in their land
Large wealth, for all were liberal of their gifts.
But with the eighth revolving year there came
A shrewd Phœnician, deep in guile, whose craft
Had wrought much wrong to many. With smooth words

This man persuaded me to go with him 355
Into Phœnicia, where his dwelling lay
And his possessions. With him I abode
For one whole year ; and when its months and days
Were ended, and another year began,
He put me in a ship to cross the sea 360
To Lybia. He had framed a treacherous plot,
By making half the vessel's cargo mine,
To lure me thither, and to sell me there
For a large price. I went on board constrained,
But with misgivings. Under a clear sky, 365
With favoring breezes from the north, we ran
O'er the mid sea, beyond the isle of Crete.
When we had left the isle, and saw no land
But only sky and sea, Saturnius bade
A black cloud gather o'er our roomy ship. 370
The sea grew dark below. On high the God
Thundered again and yet again, and sent
A bolt into our ship, which, as it felt
The lightning, reeled and shuddered, and was filled
With sulphur-smoke. The seamen from the deck 375
Fell headlong, and were tossed upon the waves
Like seamews round our galley, which the God
Forbade them to regain. But Jupiter

Gave to my hands, bewildered as I was,
 Our dark-prowed galley's mast, unbroken yet, 380
 That by its aid I might escape. I wound
 My arms around it, and the raging winds
 Swept me along. Nine days they bore me on,
 And on the tenth dark night a mighty surge
 Drifted me, as it rolled, upon the coast 385
 Of the Thesprotians. There the hero-king
 Of the Thesprotians freely sheltered me
 And fed me; for his well-beloved son
 Had found me overcome with cold and toil,
 And took me by the hand and raised me up, 390
 And led me to his father's house, and gave
 Seemly attire, a tunic and a cloak.

“There heard I of Ulysses. Pheidon told
 How he received him as a guest and friend,
 When on his homeward voyage. Then he showed 395
 The wealth Ulysses gathered, brass and gold,
 And steel divinely wrought. That store might serve
 To feed, until ten generations pass,
 Another household. But the chief himself,
 So Pheidon said, was at Dodona then; 400
 For he had gone to hear from the tall oak
 Of 'Jupiter the counsel of the God,

Whether to land in opulent Ithaca,
After long years of absence, openly
Or in disguise. The monarch took an oath 405
In his own palace, pouring to the gods
Their wine, that even-then the ship was launched,
And the crew ready to attend him home.
But me he first dismissed. There was a ship
Of the Thesprotians just about to make 410
A voyage to Dulichium, rich in fields
Of wheat. He bade them take me faithfully
To King Acastus ; but another thought
Found favor with the crew, a wicked scheme
To plunge me deeper in calamity. 415
And when our ship had sailed away from land,
They hastened to prepare me for a life
Of slavery. They took my garments off,
Mantle and cloak, and clothed me in a vest
And cloak, the very rags which thou dost see. 420
The evening brought them to the pleasant fields
Of Ithaca. They bound me in the ship
With a strong cord, and disembarked, and took
A hasty meal upon the ocean-side ;
Easily did the gods unbind my limbs. 425
I wrapped a tattered cloth about my head,

And, slipping from the polished rudder, brought
My bosom to the sea, and spread my hands,
And swam away. I soon had left the crew
At distance ; then I turned and climbed the shore, 430
Where it was dark with forest, and lay close
Within its shelter, while they wandered round
And grumbled, but they ventured not to pass
Into the island farther on their search.

They turned, and went on board their roomy bark. 435
Thus mightily the gods delivered me,
And they have brought me to a wise man's lodge,
And now I see it is my lot to live."

Then thou, Eumæus, thus didst make reply :
"Unhappy stranger, thou hast deeply moved 440
My heart in telling all that thou hast borne,
And all thy wanderings. Yet are some things wrong.
Thou hast not spoken of Ulysses well.
Why should a man like thee invent such tales,
So purposeless ? Of one thing I am sure 445
Concerning his return, — the gods all hate
My master, since they neither caused his death
In the great war of Troy, nor, when the war
Was over, suffered him to die at home,
And in the arms of those who loved him most ; 450

For then would all the Greeks have reared to him
A monument, and mighty would have been
The heritage of glory for his son ;
But now ingloriously the harpy brood
Have torn him. I, apart among my swine, 455
Go never to the town, unless, perchance,
The sage Penelope requires me there,
When some one comes with tidings from abroad.
Then those who sorrow for their absent lord,
And those who waste his substance, both inquire 460
News of the king. For me, it suits me not
Ever to ask for tidings, since the day
When an Ætolian with a flattering tale
Deceived me. He had slain a man, and came
Wandering in many lands to my abode, 465
And kindly I received him. He had seen
He said, my master with Idomeneus,
Among the Cretans, putting in repair
His galleys, shattered by a furious storm,
And in the summer time he would be here, 470
Or in the autumn, bringing ample wealth,
And his brave comrades with him. Seek not then
O aged sufferer, whom some deity
Has guided hither, to amuse my grief

With fictions that may bring back pleasant thoughts, 475
Since not for them I minister to thee
And love thee, but through reverence for Jove, —
The stranger's friend, — and pity for thyself."

Ulysses, the sagacious, spake again :
"Within thy bosom thou dost bear a heart 480
Of slow belief, since not the oath I take
Persuades or even moves thee. Make we now
A covenant, and let the gods who dwell
Upon Olympus be our witnesses,
That when thy master comes to this abode 485
Thou wilt bestow a tunic and a cloak,
And wilt despatch me clothed in seemly garb
Hence to Dulichium, whither I would go.
But if he come not as I have foretold,
Then charge thy servants that they cast me down 490
From a tall rock, that never beggar more
May think to cozen thee with lying tales."

The noble swineherd answered him and said :
"Great would my honor be, and I should gain
Great praise for worth among the sons of men, 495
If, having welcomed thee into my lodge
And spread the board for thee, I took thy life ;
Then boldly might I pray to Saturn's son.

But see, the supper hour is come, and soon
Will my companions be within, and they 500
Will make a liberal banquet ready here."

Thus did the twain confer. Now came the swine,
And those who tended them. They penned the herd
In their enclosure, and a din of cries
Rose as they entered. Then the swineherd called 505
To his companions: "Bring the best of all,
And we will make an offering for the sake
Of one who comes from far and is my guest.
And we will also feast, for we have toiled
Long time in tendance of this white-toothed herd, 510
And others waste, unpunished, what we rear."

So spake he, and began to cleave the wood
With the sharp steel; the others chose and brought
A fatted brawn, and placed him on the hearth.
Nor was the swineherd careless of the rites 515
Due to the gods, — such was his piety.
From off the white-toothed victim first he sheared
The bristles of the forehead, casting them
Into the flames, and prayed to all the gods
For wise Ulysses and his safe return. 520
Next, with a fragment of the oaken trunk
Which he had just then cleft, he smote the boar,

And the life left it. Then they cut its throat,
And, having singed it, quickly hewed the parts
Asunder, while the swineherd took and laid, 525
On the rich fat, raw portions from the limbs
For sacrifice, and other parts he cast,
Sprinkled with flour of meal, into the flames;
The rest they duly sliced and fixed on spits,
And roasted carefully, and drew it back, 530
And heaped it on the board. And now arose
The swineherd to divide the whole, for well
He knew the duty of a host. He made
Seven parts; and one he offered to the Nymphs,
To Hermes, son of Maia, one, and both 535
With prayer; the rest he set before the guests,
But, honoring Ulysses, gave to him
The white-toothed victim's ample chine. The king,
The wise Ulysses, was well pleased, and said:—

“Eumæus, be thou ever dear to Jove 540
As to myself, since with thy benefits
Thou freely honorest such a one as I.”

And thou, Eumæus, madest answer thus:
“Eat, venerable stranger, and enjoy
What is before us. At his pleasure God 545
Gives or withholds; his power is over all.”

He spake, and burned to the eternal gods
The firstlings, and poured out the dark red wine,
And to Ulysses, spoiler of walled towns,
Who sat beside the table, gave the cup. 550
Meantime to each Mesaulius brought the bread, —
A servant whom Eumæus, while his lord
Was far away, had taken for himself,
Without the order of Penelope
Or old Laertes ; from the Taphian tribe 555
With his own goods he bought him. Now the guests
Put forth their hands and shared the ready feast ;
And when their thirst and hunger were appeased
Mesaulius took the bread away, and all,
Sate with food and wine, lay down to rest. 560

Then came the darkness on, without a moon ;
And Jupiter the whole night long sent down
The rain, and strong the showery west wind blew.
And now to try the swineherd, if with all
His kindly ministrations to his guest 565
He yet would spare to him his cloak, or bid
Another do the like, Ulysses spake : —

“Eumæus, hearken thou, and all the rest,
Thy comrades, while I utter boastful words.
Wine makes me foolish, it can even cause 570

The wise to sing and laugh a silly laugh
And dance, and often to the lips it brings
Words that were better left unsaid. But since
I have begun to prattle, I will not
Keep back my thought. I would I were as young 575
And in the same full strength as when I formed
Part of an ambush near the walls of Troy.
The leaders were Ulysses, and the son
Of Atreus, Menelaus, with myself
The third, for they desired it. When we reached 580
The city and the lofty walls we lay
Couched in a marshy spot among the reeds
And thick-grown shrubs, with all our armor on.
'T was an inclement night, and the north wind
Blew bitter chill, the cold snow fell and lay 585
White like hoar-frost; ice gathered on our shields.
The rest had cloaks and tunics, and they slept
At ease, their shoulders covered with their shields.
I only, when I joined the squadron, left
My cloak unwisely, for I had not thought 590
Of such fierce cold. I went but with my shield
And my embroidered girdle. When the night
Was in its later watches, and the stars
Were turning toward their set, I thus bespake

Ulysses near me, thrusting in his side 595

My elbow, and he listened readily: —

“‘Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise!

Ulysses, I shall not be long among

The living; for I perish with the cold.

I have no cloak; some god misled my thought, 600

So that I brought one garment and no more,

And now I see there is no help for me.’

“I spake, and instantly his mind conceived

This stratagem, — such was his readiness

In council and in battle, — and he said 605

To me in a low voice: ‘Be silent now,

And let no others of the Achaians hear!’

And leaning on his elbow thus he spake: —

“‘Hear me, my friends: a dream has come from heaven

Into my sleep. Far from our ships we lie; 610

And now let some one haste to bear from us

This word to Agamemnon, Atreus’ son,

The shepherd of the people, that he send

More warriors to this ambush from the fleet.’

“He spake, and Thoas instantly arose, — 615

Andræmon’s son, — and threw his purple cloak

Aside, and hastened toward the fleet. I took

Gladly the garment he had left, and lay

Till Morning in her golden chariot came.
And now I would that I were young again, 620
And in the vigor of my prime, for then
Some one among the swineherds in the stalls
Would find, I think, a cloak for me, through love
And reverence of such a man ; but now
They hold me in slight favor, dressed in rags.” 625

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
“ O aged man ! we see no cause of blame
In thy recital, and of all thy words
Not one is unbecoming or inapt.
Thou shall not lack for garments, nor aught else 630
That any suppliant in his poverty
Might hope for at our hands to-night. With morn
Gird thou thy tatters on again ; for here
We have not many cloaks, nor many a change
Of raiment, — only one for each of us. 635
But when the son of our Ulysses comes
Again, he will provide thee with a cloak
And tunic, and will send thee where thou wilt.”

He spake and rose, and made his guest a bed
Close to the hearth, and threw on it the skins 640
Of sheep and goats, and there Ulysses lay,
O'er whom the swineherd spread a thick large cloak,

Which he had often worn for a defence
When a wild winter storm was in the air.

Thus slept Ulysses with the young men near. 645
A couch within, and distant from his charge,
Pleased not the swineherd, who first armed himself,
And then went forth. Ulysses gladly saw
That while he was in distant lands his goods
Were watched so faithfully. Eumæus hung 650
About his sturdy shoulders a sharp sword,
And wrapped a thick cloak round him, tempest-proof,
And took the hide of a huge pampered goat,
And a well-pointed javelin for defence
Both against dogs and men. So went he forth 655
To take his rest where lay the white-toothed swine,
Herded and slumbering underneath a rock,
Whose hollow fenced them from the keen north wind.

BOOK XV.

THEN Pallas, hastening to the mighty realm
Of Lacedæmon, sought the illustrious son
Of great Ulysses, to remind the youth
Of home, and bid him think of his return.
She found Telemachus and Nestor's son 5
Upon their couches in the portico
Of Menelaus, the renowned. Deep sleep
Held Nestor's son; but to Telemachus
The welcome slumber came not, for his thoughts
Uneasily through all the quiet night 10
Dwelt on his father. Now beside his bed
The blue-eyed Pallas took her stand and spake. —
“Telemachus, it is no longer well
That thou shouldst wander from thy home, and leave
All thy possessions, and those arrogant men 15
That crowd thy halls. Beware, lest they devour
Thy substance utterly, dividing all
Among them, and this journey be for nought.

Make suit to Menelaus, great in war,
Quickly to send thee home, that thou mayst join 20
Thy blameless mother in thy halls ; for now
Her father and her brothers counsel her
To wed Eurymachus, whose gifts exceed
Those of the other suitors, and besides
He offers a yet richer bridal dower. 25
It were not hard without thy leave to take
Wealth from a palace. What a wife will do
Thou knowest. 'T is her pleasure to increase
The riches of the man whom she has wed.
Care of her former children has she none, 30
Nor memory of the husband whom she took
While yet a maid, and who is in his grave ;
Of these she never speaks. Return thou, then,
And give thy goods in charge to one among
The handmaids of thy household who shall seem 35
The fittest for the trust, until the gods
Bring thee a noble wife. Another word
Have I for thee, and bear thou it in mind :
The chief among the suitors in the strait
Between the rugged Samos and the isle 40
Of Ithaca are lurking, in the hope
To slay thee on thy voyage home ; but this

I think they cannot do before the earth
Hold many of the suitor-crew who make
Thy wealth a spoil. Steer thou thy gallant bark 45
Far from the isles ; sail only in the night.
Some god, whoever it may be that keeps
Watch over thee, will send a prosperous gale.
When to the nearest shore of Ithaca
Thou comest in thy ship, let it go on, 50
With all thy comrades, to the town, while thou
Repairest to the keeper of thy swine,
Whose heart is faithful to thee. There remain
With him that night, and send him to the town
With tidings to the sage Penelope 55
That thou art come from Pylos and art safe.”

So having said, the goddess took her way
Up to the Olympian height. Telemachus
Touched with his heel and wakened Nestor's son
From a soft slumber, and bespake him thus : — 60

“ Rise, Nestor's son, Peisistratus, and bring
The firm-paced steeds and yoke them to the car,
And we will now set forth upon our way.”

And Nestor's son, Peisistratus, replied :
“ Telemachus, whatever be our haste, 65
It were not well in darkness to begin

Our journey, and the morn will soon be here.
Remain till Menelaus, Atreus' son,
The hero mighty with the spear, shall come,
And bring his gifts, and place them in our car, 70
And send us on our way with kindly words.
Well does a guest remember all his days
The generous host who shows himself his friend."

He spake, and quickly on her car of gold
Appeared the Morn. Then Menelaus came, 75
The great in battle, from his couch beside
The fair-haired Helen. When Telemachus
Knew of the king's approach, the hero threw
In haste his tunic o'er his noble form,
And over his broad shoulders flung a cloak 80
Of ample folds. Then, going forth, the son
Of great Ulysses met the king and said: —

"Atrides Menelaus, loved of Jove
And sovereign of the people, send me hence,
I pray, to the dear country of my birth, 85
For earnestly I long to be at home."

And Menelaus, great in war, replied:
"Telemachus, I will not keep thee long,
Since thou so much desirest to return.
I am displeased with him who as a host 90

Is lavish of his love, for he will hate
Beyond due measure ; best it is to take
The middle way. It is alike a wrong
To thrust the unwilling stranger out of doors,
And to detain him when he longs to go. 95
While he is with us we should cherish him,
And, when he wishes, help him to depart.
Remain until I bring thee worthy gifts
And place them in thy chariot, that thine eyes
May look on them ; and I will give command 100
That in the palace here the women spread
A liberal feast from stores that lie within.
But if, in turning from thy course, thou choose
To pass through Hellas and the midland tract
Of Argos, I will yoke my steeds and go 105
With thee, and show the cities thronged with men ;
Nor will they send us empty-handed thence,
But bring us gifts which we may bear away, —
Tripod, perchance, or caldron wrought of brass,
Perchance a pair of mules or golden cup.” 110

Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn :
“ Atrides Menelaus, loved of Jove
And sovereign of the people, rather far
Would I return to my own home ; for there

Is no man left in charge of what is mine, 115
And I must go, lest, while I vainly seek
My father, I may perish, or may lose
Some valued treasure from my palace rooms."

The valiant Menelaus heard, and bade
His wife and maidens spread without delay 120
A ready banquet from the stores within.
Then Eteōneus from his morning sleep,
Son of Boëtheus, came, for very near
His dwelling was. The sovereign bade him light
A fire and roast the flesh, and he obeyed. 125
And then into the fragrant treasure-room
Descended Menelaus, not alone ;
Helen and Megapenthes went with him.
And when they came to where the treasures lay,
Atrides took a double goblet up, 130
And bade his son, young Megapenthes, bear
A silver beaker thence, while Helen stood
Beside the coffer where the embroidered robes
Wrought by her hands were laid. The glorious dame
Took one and brought it forth, most beautiful 135
In needlework, and amplest of them all.
The garment glittered like a star, and lay
Below the other robes. Then, passing through

The palace halls, they found Telemachus,
And thus the fair-haired Menelaus spake : —

140

“Telemachus, may Jove the Thunderer,
Husband of Juno, grant thee to return
According to thy wish ! I give thee here
Of all the treasures which my house contains
The fairest and most precious. I present
A goblet all of silver, save the lips,
And they are bound with gold ; it is the work
Of Vulcan. Phædimus the hero, king
Of the Sidonians, gave it me when once
His palace sheltered me. He gave it me
At parting, and I now would have it thine.”

145

150

Atrides spake, and gave into his hands
The double goblet. Megapenthes next
Before him set the shining beaker wrought
Of silver. Rosy Helen, holding up
The robe, drew near, and spake to him and said : —

155

“I also bring to thee, dear son, a gift,
The work of Helen’s hands, which thou shalt keep,
In memory of her, until the day
Of thy desired espousals, when thy bride
Shall wear it. Let it in the mean time lie
Within thy halls, in thy dear mother’s care ;

160

And mayst thou soon and happily arrive
At thy fair palace and thy native coast."

So spake she, placing in his hands the robe. 165
He took it, and was glad. Peisistratus
Was moved with wonder as he saw, and laid
The presents in the car. The fair-haired king
Then led them to the hall, and seated them
On thrones and couches, where a maiden brought 170
Water in a fair golden ewer, and o'er
A silver basin poured it for their hands,
And near them set a table smoothly wrought.
The matron of the palace brought them bread
And many a delicate dish to please the taste 175
From stores within the house. Then to the board
Boëtheus' son drew near and carved the meats,
And gave to each a portion, while the son
Of glorious Menelaus poured the wine.
The guests put forth their hands and shared the food 180
That lay prepared before them. When the calls
Of thirst and hunger ceased, Telemachus
And Nestor's famous son brought forth and yoked
The steeds, and climbed into the sumptuous car,
And drove from out the echoing portico. 185
Atrides Menelaus, amber-haired,

Went forth with them, and, holding in his hand
A golden cup of generous wine, poured out
An offering for their voyage to the gods.
Before the steeds he took his stand, and first 190
Drank from the cup, and then bespoke the guests : —

“ Now fare ye well, young men, and when ye come
To Nestor, shepherd of the people, give
Greetings from me ; for he was kind to me
As if he were a father, when the sons 195
Of Greece were warring in the realm of Troy.”

Then spake in turn discreet Telemachus :
“ Assuredly I shall relate to him,
As soon as I am with him, all that thou,
O foster-child of Jove, hast bid me say ; 200
And would to heaven I might as surely tell
Ulysses in his palace, when again
I come to Ithaca, how welcome thou
Hast made me here, and how I came away
With treasures rich and many from thy court.” 205

As thus he spake, an eagle to the right
Appeared, that, flying, bore a large white goose,
Clutched from the tame flock in the palace court ;
And men and women ran the way he flew,
And shouted after him. Before the steeds 210

Of the young men, and still on the right hand,
The bird went sweeping on. They saw well pleased,
And every heart was gladdened. To the rest
Peisistratus, the son of Nestor, said : —

“Now tell me, Menelaus, loved of Jove, 215
Prince of the people! does the god who sends
This portent mean the sign for us or thee?”

He spake; and Menelaus, dear to Mars,
Paused, thinking how to answer him aright,
When thus the long-robed Helen interposed : — 220

“Listen to me, and I will prophesy
As the gods prompt me, and as I believe
The event will be. Just as this eagle came
From the wild hills, his birthplace and his haunt,
And seized and bore away the water-fowl 225
Reared near our halls, so will Ulysses come,
After much hardship and long wanderings,
To his own home, to be avenged; perchance
Already is at home, and meditates
An evil end to all the suitor crew.” 230

Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn :
“May Juno’s husband, Jove the Thunderer,
So order the event, and I will there
Make vows to thee as to a deity.”

He spake, and touched the coursers with the lash ; 235
And through the city rapidly they went
And toward the plain, and all day long they shook
The yoke upon their necks. The sun went down ;
The roads all lay in darkness as they came
To Pheræ, and the house of Diocles, 240
Whose father was Orsilochus, and he
The offspring of Alpheius. There that night
They slept ; their host was liberal of his cheer.
But when appeared the daughter of the Dawn,
The rosy-fingered Morn, they yoked the steeds 245
And climbed the sumptuous car, and drove afield
From underneath the echoing portico.
The son of Nestor plied the lash ; the steeds
Flew not unwillingly, and quickly reached
The lofty citadel of Pylos. There 250
Telemachus bespake his comrade thus : —

“Wilt thou consent to do what I shall ask,
O son of Nestor ? ’T is our boast that we
Are friends because our fathers were ; besides,
We are of equal age, and journeying thus 255
Has made our friendship firmer. Take me not,
O foster-child of Jove, beyond the spot
Where lies my galley, lest against my will

The aged Nestor should detain me here
Through kindness, when I needs must hasten home.” 260

He spake, and then the son of Nestor mused
How what his friend desired might best be done.
And this seemed wisest after careful thought :
He turned the chariot to the ship and shore,
And taking out the garments and the gold, — 265
Beautiful gifts which Menelaus gave, —
He put them in the galley’s stern, and thus
Bespake Telemachus with winged words : —

“ Embark in haste, and summon all thy crew
On board before I reach my home and tell 270
The aged king. I know how vehement
His temper is ; he will not let thee go,
But hastening hither, to enforce thy stay
At Pylos, will not, I am sure, go back
Without thee ; his displeasure will be great.” 275

He spake, and toward the Pylian city turned
His steeds with flowing manes, and quickly reached
His home. Meantime Telemachus held forth
To his companions, thus exhorting them : —

“ My friends, make ready all things in our ship 280
And mount the deck, for we must now set sail.”

He spake, they hearkened and obeyed, and leaped

On board and manned the benches. While he thus
Was hastening his departure, offering prayer
And pouring wine to Pallas at the stern, 285
A stranger came, a seer, a fugitive
From Argos, where his hand had slain a man.
Melampus was his ancestor, who dwelt
Some time in Pylos, mother of fair flocks, —
Rich, and inhabiting a sumptuous house 290
Among the Pylians. Afterward he joined
Another people, fleeing from his home
And from the mighty Neleus, haughtiest
Of living men, who, seizing his large wealth,
Held it a year by force. Melampus lay 295
Meantime within the house of Phylacus
Fast bound, and suffering greatly, both because
Of Neleus' daughter, and of his own mind
Distempered by the unapproachable
Erinnys. Yet did he escape from death, 300
And drove the lowing herds to Phylace
And Pylos, and avenged his cruel wrong
On Neleus, carrying off his child to be
A consort for his brother. Then he came
Into the realm of Argos, famed for steeds; 305
For there it was decreed that he should dwell,

And rule o'er many of the Argive race.
And there he took a wife and built a house, —
A lofty pile; and there to him were born
Antiphates and Mantius, valiant men. 310
Antiphates was father of a son,
The brave Oicleus, and to him was born
Amphioraüs, one of those whose voice
Rouses the nations. Ægis-bearing Jove
And Phœbus loved him with exceeding love; 315
Yet reached he not the threshold of old age,
But, through the treachery of his bribed wife,
Perished too soon at Thebes. To him were born
Two sons, Alcmæon and Amphilocheus.
Clytus and Polyphides were the sons 320
Of Mantius; but Aurora, she who fills
A golden chariot, bore away to heaven
Clytus for his great beauty, there to dwell
Among the immortals, while Apollo gave
To Polyphides of the noble mind 325
To be a prophet, first of living men,
Since now Amphiaraüs was no more.
His father had displeased him, and he went
To Hyperesia, where he dwelt, and there
Revealed to all what yet should come to pass. 330

It was his son who now approached ; his name
Was Theoclymenus ; he saw the prince
Telemachus, who stood beside the swift
Black ship, and, pouring a libation, prayed ;
And thus he said to him in winged words : — 335

“ My friend, whom here beside this bark I find
Making a pious offering, I entreat
Both by that offering and the deity,
And by thy life, and by the lives of these
Who follow thee, declare to me the truth, 340
And keep back nought of all that I inquire, —
Who art thou, from what race of men, and where
Thy city lies, and who thy parents are.”

Then spake in turn discreet Telemachus :
Stranger, to every point I answer thee. 345
I am by race a son of Ithaca,
My father was Ulysses when alive,
But he has died a miserable death ;
Long years has he been absent, and I came
With my companions here, and this black ship, 350
To gather tidings of my father’s fate.”

Then said the godlike Theoclymenus :
“ I too, like thee, am far away from home ;
For I have slain a man of my own tribe,

And he had many brothers, many friends, 355
In Argos famed for steeds. Great is the power
Of those Achaians, and I flee from them
And the black doom of death, to be henceforth
A wanderer among men. O, shelter me
On board thy galley! I, a fugitive, 360
Implore thy mercy, lest they overtake
And slay me; they are surely on my track.”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied:
“If thou desire to come on board my ship,
I shall not hinder thee. Come with us then, 365
And take a friendly share in what we have.”

So saying he received his brazen spear,
And laid it on the good ship's deck, and went
Himself on board, and, taking at the stern
His place, he seated Theoclymenus 370
Beside him. Then the mariners cast loose
The hawsers, and Telemachus gave forth
The order to prepare for sea. They heard
And eagerly obeyed; they raised the mast,
A pine-tree stem, — and, bringing it to stand 375
In its deep socket, bound it there with cords,
And hoisted by their strongly twisted thongs
The ship's white sails. The blue-eyed Pallas sent

A favorable and fresh-blowing wind,
That swept the sky to drive more speedily 380
The galley through the salt-sea waves. They came
To Cruni, and to Chalcis pleasantly
Watered by rivers. Now the sun went down ;
Night closed around their way, but onward still
A favorable wind from Jupiter 385
Toward Pheræ bore them, and the hallowed coast
Of Elis, where the Epeian race bear sway,
And then among the isles whose rocky peaks
Rise from the waters. Here Telemachus
Mused thoughtfully on what his fate might be, — 390
To perish by the ambush or escape.

Meantime Ulysses and the swineherd sat
At meat within the lodge ; the other men
Were at the board, and when the calls of thirst
And hunger ceased, Ulysses spake to try 395
The swineherd, whether he were bent to show
Yet further kindness, and entreat his stay,
Or whether he would send him to the town.

“ Eumæus, hearken thou, and all the rest.
To-morrow ’t is my wish to go to town, 400
That I may beg, and be no charge to thee
And thy companions. Give me thy advice,

And send a trusty guide to show the way.
There will I roam the streets, for so I must,
And haply some one there will give a cup 405
Of wine and cake of meal. And when I find
The house of great Ulysses, I will tell
The sage Penelope the news I bring.
Nay, I would even go among the crew
Of arrogant suitors, who perhaps might give 410
A meal, for there is plenty at their feasts,
And I would do whatever they require.
For let me tell thee, and do thou give heed,
There lives no man who can contend with me
In menial tasks, — to keep alive a fire 415
With fuel, cleave dry wood, and carve and roast
The meat and pour the wine, — whate'er is done
By poor men waiting on the better sort."

And thou, Eumæus, keeper of the swine,
Didst answer in displeasure: "Woe is me! 420
How could thy bosom harbor such a thought?
O stranger! thou must surely be resolved
To perish if thy purpose be to go
Among the suitor crew, whose insolence
And riot reach the iron vault of heaven. 425
Not such attendants minister to them

As thou art, but fair youths arrayed in cloaks
And tunics, with sleek heads and smooth of face.
These wait at polished tables heavily
Loaded with bread and flesh and wine. Stay thou 430
Content among us, sure that no one here
Is wearied by thy presence, neither I
Nor any of my fellows. When he comes,
The dear son of Ulysses will provide
For thee the garments thou dost need, — a cloak 435
And tunic, — and will send thee where thou wilt.”

Ulysses, the great sufferer, answered thus :
“I pray that thou mayst be as dear to Jove,
The great All-Father, as thou art to me,
Since through thy kindness I enjoy a pause 440
Amid my weary wanderings. There is nought
Worse than a wandering life. Unseemly cares
A hungry stomach brings to homeless men ;
Hardship and grief are theirs. But since thou wilt
That I remain and wait for thy young lord, 445
Speak to me of the mother of thy chief
Ulysses, and his father, whom he left
Just on the threshold of old age, if yet
They live, and still may look upon the sun ;
Or have they died, and passed to Pluto’s realm ? ” 450

And then in turn the master swineherd spake :
“ Rightly and truly will I answer thee,
O stranger ! still Laertes lives, but prays
Continually to Jove that he may die
In his own house ; for sorely he laments 455
His son long absent, and his excellent wife,
Bride of his youth, whose death has brought on him
Sharp sorrow, and old age before its time.
By a sad death she died, — through wasting grief
For her lost, glorious son. May no one here, 460
No friend of mine, nor one who has bestowed
A kindness on me, die by such a death !
While yet she lived, great as her sorrow was,
I loved to speak with her and hear her words ;
For she had reared me with her youngest-born, — 465
Her daughter, long-robed Ctimaena. With her
Was I brought up, and scarcely less than her
Was held in honor. When at length we came
Into the pleasant years of youth, they sent
The princess hence to Samos, and received 470
Large presents ; but to me her mother gave
Garments of price, a tunic and a cloak,
And sandals for my feet, and sent me forth
Into the fields, and loved me more and more.

All this is over now, yet must I say 475
My calling has been prospered by the gods.
From this I have the means to eat and drink,
And wherewithal to feast a worthy guest;
But from the queen I never have a word
Or deed of kindness, since that evil came 480
Upon her house, — that crew of lawless men.
Greatly the servants would rejoice to speak
Before their mistress, and inquire her will,
And eat and drink, and carry to their homes
Some gift, for gifts delight a servant's heart." 485

Again Ulysses, the sagacious, spake :
"Swineherd Eumæus, thou, while yet a child,
Wert doubtless strangely tossed about the world,
Far from thy kindred and thy native land.
Now tell me, was the spacious town wherein 490
Thy father and thy mother dwelt laid waste?
Or wert thou left among the flocks and herds
Untended, and borne off by hostile men,
Who came in ships and sold thee to the lord
Of these possessions for a worthy price?" 495

And then the master swineherd spake again :
"Since thou dost ask me, stranger, hear my words
In silence ; sit at ease and drink thy wine.

These nights are very long ; there 's time enough
For sleep, and time to entertain, ourselves 500
With talk. It is not fitting to lie down
Ere the due hour arrive, and too much sleep
Is hurtful. Whosoever here shall feel
The strong desire, let him withdraw and sleep,
And rise with early morn and break his fast, 505
And tend my master's swine. Let us remain
Within, and drink and feast, and pass the time
Gayly, relating what we have endured,
Each one of us ; for in the after time
One who has suffered much and wandered far 510
May take a pleasure even in his griefs.

“ But let me tell what thou hast asked of me :
Beyond Ortygia lies an island named
Syria ; thou must have heard of it. The sun
Above it turns his course. It is not large, 515
But fruitful, fit for pasturage, and rich
In flocks, abounding both in wine and wheat.
There never famine comes, nor foul disease
Fastens on wretched mortals ; but when men
Grow old, Apollo of the silver bow 520
Comes with Diana, aims his silent shafts,
And slays them. There two cities stand, and share

The isle between them. There my father reigned,
The godlike Ctesias, son of Ormenus,
And both the cities owned him as their king. 525

“There came a crew of that seafaring race,
The people of Phœnicia, to our isle.
Shrewd fellows they, and brought in their black ship
Large store of trinkets. In my father’s house
Was a Phœnician woman, large and fair, 530
And skilful in embroidery. As she came
A laundress to their ship, those cunning men
Seduced her. One of them obtained her love, —
For oft doth love mislead weak womankind,
Even of the more discreet. Her paramour 535
Asked who she was, and whence. She pointed out
The lofty pile in which my father dwelt.

“‘At Sidon, rich in brass, I had my birth, —
A daughter of the opulent Arybas;
And once, as I was coming from the fields, 540
The Taphian pirates seized and bore me off,
And brought me to this isle and sold me here,
At that man’s house; much gold he paid for me.’

“Then said her paramour: ‘Wilt thou not then
Return with us, that thou mayst see again 545
Father and mother, and their fair abode?’

For yet they live, and rumor says are rich.'

"To this the woman answered: 'I consent,
If first ye take an oath, — ye mariners, —
And pledge your faith to bear me safely home.' 550

"She spake, and they complied, and when the oath
Was duly taken, thus the woman said: —

"'Now hold your peace; let none of all the crew
Speak to me more, in meeting on the road
Or at the fountain, lest some one should tell 555

The old man at the house, and he suspect
Some fraud and bind me fast, and plot your death.
Lock up your words within your breast; make haste
To buy supplies, and when the ship is full
Of all things needful, let a messenger 560

Come to me at the palace with all speed;
And I will bring with me whatever gold
My hands may find, and something else to pay
My passage. I am nurse to the young heir
Of the good man who dwells in yonder halls, — 565

A shrewd boy for his years, who oft goes out
With me, — and I will lead him to the ship,
And he will bring, in any foreign land
To which ye carry him, a liberal price.'

"The woman spake, and to our fair abode 570

Departed. The Phœnician crew remained
Until the twelvemonth's end, and filled their ship
With many things, and, when its roomy hull
Was fully laden, sent a messenger
To tell the woman. He, a cunning man, 575
Came to my father's house, and brought with him
A golden necklace set with amber beads.
The palace maidens and the gracious queen,
My mother, took it in their hands, and gazed
Upon it, and debated of its price. 580
Meantime the bearer gave the sign, and soon
Departed to the ship. The woman took
My hand and led me forth. Within the hall
She found upon the tables ready placed
The goblets for my father's guests, his peers ; 585
But they were absent, and in council yet
Amid a great assembly. She concealed
Three goblets in her bosom, and bore off
The theft. I followed thoughtlessly. The sun
Went down, and darkness brooded o'er the ways. 590
Briskly we walked, and reached the famous port
And the fast-sailing ship. They took us both
On board, and sailed. Along its ocean path
The vessel ran, and Jupiter bestowed

A favorable wind. Six days we sailed, 595
Both night and day ; but when Saturnian Jove
Brought the seventh day, Diana, archer-queen,
Struck down the woman, and with sudden noise
Headlong she plunged into the hold, as dives
A sea-gull. But the seamen cast her forth 600
To fishes and to sea-calves. I was left
Alone and sorrowful. The winds and waves
Carried our galley on to Ithaca ;
And there Laertes purchased me, and thus
I first beheld the land in which I dwell.” 605

And then again the great Ulysses spake :
“ Eumæus, the sad story of thy wrongs
And sufferings moves me deeply ; yet hath Jove
Among thy evil fortunes given this good,
That, after all thy sufferings, thou art lodged 610
With a good master, who abundantly
Provides thee meat and drink ; thou ledest here
A pleasant life, while I am come to thee.
From wandering long and over many lands.”

So talked they with each other. No long time 615
They passed in sleep, for soon the Morning came,
Throned on her car of gold. Beside the shore
The comrades of Telemachus cast loose
The sails, took down the mast, and with their oars

Brought in the vessel to its place. They threw
The anchors out and bound the hawsers fast,
And went upon the sea-beach, where they dressed
Their morning meal, and mingled purple wine.
Then, when the calls of thirst and hunger ceased,
Discreet Telemachus bespake the crew : — 620
625

“Take the black ship to town. I visit first
The fields, and see my herdsmen, and at eve
Will come to town. To-morrow I will give
The parting feast, rich meats and generous wine.”

Then said the godlike Theoclymenus : 630
“Whither, my son, am I to go? What house
Of all the chiefs of rugged Ithaca
Shall I seek shelter in? with thee, perhaps,
In thine own palace where thy mother dwells.”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied : 635
“I would have asked thee at another time
To make our house thy home, for there would be
No lack of kindly welcome. T were not well
To ask thee now, for I shall not be there,
Nor will my mother see thee, — since not oft 640
Doth she appear before the suitor-train,
But in an upper room, apart from them,
Weaves at her loom a web. Another man
I name, Eurymachus, the illustrious son

Of the sage Polybus, to be thy host.

645

The noblest of the suitors he, and seeks

Most earnestly to wed the queen, and take

The rank Ulysses held. Olympian Jove,

Who dwells in ether, knows the fatal day

That may o'ertake the suitors ere she wed."

650

As thus he spake, a falcon on the right

Flew by, Apollo's messenger. A dove

Was in his talons, which he tore, and poured

The feathers down between Telemachus

And where the galley lay. When this was seen

655

By Theoclymenus, he called the youth

Apart, alone, and took his hand and said : —

"The bird that passed us, O Telemachus,

Upon the right, flew not without a god

To guide him. When I saw it, well I knew

660

The omen. Not in Ithaca exists

A house of a more kingly destiny

Than thine, and ever will its power prevail."

And thus discreet Telemachus replied :

"O stranger, may thy saying come to pass :

665

Then shalt thou quickly know me for thy friend,

And be rewarded with such liberal gifts

That all who meet thee shall rejoice with thee."

Then turning to Piræus he bespake

That faithful follower thus : “ Piræus, son
Of Clytius, thou who ever wert the first
To move, at my command, of all the men
Who went with me to Pylos, take, I pray,
This stranger to thy house, and there provide
For him, and honor him until I come.” 670 675

Piræus, mighty with the spear, replied :
“ Telemachus, however long thy stay,
This man shall be my guest, nor ever lack
Beneath my roof for hospitable care.”

He spake, and climbed the deck, and bade his men 680
Enter the ship and cast the fastenings loose.
Quickly they came together, went on board
And manned the benches, while Telemachus
Bound the fair sandals to his feet, and took
His massive spear with its sharp blade of brass 685
That lay upon the deck. The men unbound
The hawsers, shoved the galley forth, and sailed
Townward, as they were bidden by the son
Of great Ulysses. Meantime the quick feet
Of the young chieftain bore him on until 690
He reached the lodge where his great herds of swine
Were fed, and, careful of his master's wealth,
Beside his charge the worthy swineherd slept.

BOOK XVI.

MEANTIME Ulysses and that noble hind
The swineherd, in the lodge, at early dawn,
Lighted a fire, prepared a meal, and sent
The herdsmen forth to drive the swine afield.
The dogs, so apt to bark, came fawning round 5
And barked not as Telemachus drew near.
Ulysses heard the sound of coming feet,
And marked the crouching dogs, and suddenly
Bespake Eumæus thus with winged words : —
“Eumæus, without doubt some friend of thine, 10
Or some one known familiarly, is near.
There is no barking of the dogs ; they fawn
Around him, and I hear the sound of feet.”
Scarce had he spoken, when within the porch
Stood his dear son. The swineherd starting up, 15
Surprised, let fall the vessels from his hands
In which he mingled the rich wines, and flew
To meet his master ; kissed him on the brow ;

Kissed both his shining eyes and both his hands,
With many tears. As when a father takes 20
Into his arms a son whom tenderly
He loves, returning from a distant land
In the tenth year, — his only son, the child
Of his old age, for whom he long has borne
Hardship and grief, — so to Telemachus 25
The swineherd clung, and kissed him o'er and o'er,
As one escaped from death, and, shedding still
Warm tears, bespoke him thus with winged words : —

“Thou comest, O Telemachus! the light
Is not more sweet to me. I never thought 30
To see thee more when thou hadst once embarked
For Pylos. Now come in, beloved child,
And let my heart rejoice that once again
I have thee here, so newly come from far.
For 't is not often that thou visitest 35
Herdsman and fields, but dwellest in the town, —
Such is thy will, — beholding day by day
The wasteful pillage of the suitor-train.”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied :
“So be it, father ; for thy sake I came 40
To see thee with these eyes, and hear thee speak
And tell me if my mother dwells within

The palace yet; or has some wooer led
The queen away, his bride, and does the couch
Of great Ulysses lie untapestried, 45
With ugly cobwebs gathering over it?"

And then the master swineherd spake in turn :
"Most true it is that with a constant mind
The queen inhabits yet thy palace halls,
And wastes in tears her wretched nights and days." 50

So speaking he received his brazen lance,
And over the stone threshold passed the prince
Into the lodge. Ulysses yielded up
His seat to him; Telemachus forbade.

"Nay, stranger, sit; it shall be ours to find 55
Elsewhere a seat in this our lodge, and he
Who should provide it is already here."

He spake; Ulysses turned, and took again
His place; the swineherd made a pile of twigs
And covered it with skins, on which sat down 60
The dear son of Ulysses. Next he brought
Dishes of roasted meats which yet remained,
Part of the banquet of the day before,
And heaped the canisters with bread, and mixed
The rich wines in a wooden bowl. He sat 65
Right opposite Ulysses. All put forth

Their hands and shared the meats upon the board ;
And when the calls of thirst and hunger ceased,
Thus to the swineherd said Telemachus : —

“ Whence, father, is this stranger, and how brought 70
By seamen to the coast of Ithaca ?
And who are they that brought him ? — nor I deem
He came not over to our isle on foot.”

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
“ True answer will I make to all. He claims 75
To be a son of the broad isle of Crete,
And says that in his wanderings he has passed
Through many cities of the world, for so
Some god ordained ; and now, escaped by flight
From a Thesprotian galley, he has sought 80
A refuge in my lodge. Into thy hands
I give him ; deal thou with him as thou wilt.
He is thy suppliant, and makes suit to thee.”

Then spake discreet Telemachus again :
“ Eumæus, thou hast uttered words that pierce 85
My heart with pain ; for how can I receive
A stranger at my house ? I am a youth
Who never yet has trusted in his arm
To beat the offerer of an insult back.
And in my mother’s mind the choice is yet 90

Uncertain whether to remain with me
The mistress of my household, keeping still
Her constant reverence for her husband's bed,
And still obedient to the people's voice,
Or whether she shall follow as a bride
Him of the Achaian suitors in my halls
Who is accounted worthiest, and who brings
The richest gifts. Now, as to this thy guest,
Since he has sought thy lodge, I give to him
A cloak and tunic, seemly of their kind,
A two-edged sword, and sandals for his feet.
And I will send him to whatever coast
He may desire to go. Yet, if thou wilt,
Lodge him beneath thy roof, and I will send
Raiment and food, that he may be no charge
To thee or thy companions. To my house
Among the suitor-train I cannot bear
That he should go. Those men are insolent
Beyond all measure; they would scoff at him,
And greatly should I grieve. The boldest man
Against so many might contend in vain,
And greater is their power by far than mine."

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Then spake Ulysses, the great sufferer :
"O friend, — since I have liberty to speak, —

My very heart is wounded when I hear 115
What wrongs the suitors practise in thy halls
Against a youth like thee. But give me leave
To ask if thou submittest willingly,
Or do thy people, hearkening to some god,
Hate thee with open hatred? Dost thou blame 120
Thy brothers? — for in brothers men confide
Even in a desperate conflict. Would that I
Were young again, and with the will I have,
Or that I could become Ulysses' son,
Or were that chief himself returned at last 125
From all his wanderings, — and there yet is hope
Of his return, — then might another strike
My head off if I would not instantly
Enter the house of Laertiades
And make myself a mischief to them all. 130
But should they overcome me, thus alone
Contending with such numbers, I would choose
Rather in mine own palace to be slain
Than every day behold such shameful deeds, —
Insulted guests, maid-servants foully dragged 135
Through those fair palace chambers, wine-casks drained,
And gluttons feasting idly, wastefully,
And others toiling for them without end."

Then spake again discreet Telemachus :

“Stranger, thou shalt be answered faithfully. 140

Know, then, the people are by no means wroth

With me, nor have I brothers to accuse,

Though in a desperate conflict men rely

Upon a brother's aid. Saturnian Jove

Confines our lineage to a single head. 145

The king Arcesius had an only son,

Laertes, and to him was only born

Ulysses ; and Ulysses left me here,

The only scion of his house, and he

Had little joy of me. Our halls are filled 150

With enemies, the chief men of the isles, —

Dulichium, Samos, and Zacynthus dark

With forests, and the rugged Ithaca, —

So many woo my mother and consume

Our substance. She rejects not utterly 155

Their hateful suit, nor yet will give consent

And end it. They go on to waste my wealth,

And soon will end me also ; but the event

Rests with the gods. — And go thou now with speed,

Eumæus, father, to Penelope, 160

And say that I am safe, and just returned

From Pylos. I remain within the lodge.

And then come back as soon as thou hast told
The queen alone. Let none of all the Greeks
Hear aught ; for they are plotting harm to me.” 165

Then thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
“ Enough, I see it all, thy words are said
To one who understands them. But, I pray,
Direct me whether in my way to take
A message to Laertes, the distressed. 170
While sorrowing for Ulysses he o’ersaw
The labors of the field, and ate and drank,
As he had appetite, with those who wrought.
But since thy voyage to the Pylion coast
They say he never takes his daily meals 175
As he was wont, nor oversees the work,
But sits and mourns and sighs and pines away,
Until his limbs are shrivelled to the bone.”

Then spake discreet Telemachus again :
“ ’T is sad, but we must leave him to his grief 180
A little while. Could everything be made
To happen as we mortals wish, I then
Would first desire my father’s safe return.
But thou, when thou hast given thy message, haste
Hither again, nor wander through the fields 185
To him ; but let my mother send at once

The matron of her household, privately,
To bear the tidings to the aged man."

He spake to speed the swineherd, who took up
His sandals, bound them on, and bent his way 190
Townward. Not unperceived by Pallas went
Eumæus from the lodge. She came in shape
A woman beautiful and stately, skilled
In household arts, the noblest. Near the gate
She stood, right opposite. Ulysses saw ; 195
Telemachus beheld her not ; the gods
Not always manifest themselves to all.
Ulysses and the mastiffs saw ; the dogs
Barked not, but, whimpering, fled from her and sought
The stalls within. She beckoned with her brows ; 200
Ulysses knew her meaning and came forth,
And passed the great wall of the court, and there
Stood near to Pallas, who bespoke him thus : —

"Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,
Speak with thy son ; conceal from him the truth 205
No longer, that, prepared to make an end
Of that vile suitor-crew, ye may go up
Into the royal town. Nor long will I
Be absent ; I am ready for the assault."

Thus spake the goddess. Putting forth a wand 210

Of gold, she touched the chief. Beneath that touch
His breast was covered with a new-blanchèd robe
And tunic. To his frame it gave new strength ;
His swarthy color came again, his cheeks
Grew full, and the beard darkened on his chin. 215

This done, she disappeared. Ulysses came
Into the lodge again ; his son beheld
Amazed and overawed, and turned his eyes
Away, as if in presence of a god,
And thus bespake the chief with winged words : — 220

“ O stranger, thou art other than thou wert ;
Thy garb is not the same, nor are thy looks ;
Thou surely art some deity of those
Whose habitation is the ample heaven.
Be gracious to us, let us bring to thee 225
Such sacrifices as thou wilt accept
And gifts of graven gold ; be merciful.”

Ulysses, the great sufferer, thus replied :
“ I am no god ; how am I like the gods ?
I am thy father, he for whom thy sighs 230
Are breathed, and sorrows borne, and wrongs endured.”

He spake and kissed his son, and from his lids
Tears fell to earth, that long had been restrained.
And then Telemachus, who could not think

The stranger was his father, answered thus : —

235

“Nay, thou art not my father, thou art not
Ulysses ; rather hath some deity
Sought to deceive me, that my grief may be
The sharper ; for no mortal man would do
What has been done, unless some god should come
To aid him, and to make him young or old
At pleasure ; for thou wert a moment since
An aged man, and sordidly arrayed,
And now art like the gods of the wide heaven.”

240

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :

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“It is not well, Telemachus, to greet
With boundless wonder and astonishment
Thy father in this lodge. Be sure of this,
That no Ulysses other than myself
Will ever enter here. I, who am he,
Have suffered greatly and have wandered far,
And in the twentieth year am come again
To mine own land. Thou hast beheld to-day
A wonder wrought by Pallas, huntress-queen,
Who makes me what she will, such power is hers, —
Sometimes to seem a beggar, and in turn
A young man in a comely garb. The gods
Whose home is in the heavens can easily

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255

Exalt a mortal man, or bring him low."

He spake and sat him down. Telemachus 260
Around his glorious father threw his arms,
And shed a shower of tears. Both felt at heart
A passionate desire to weep; they wept
Aloud, — and louder were their cries than those
Of eagles, or the sharp-clawed vulture tribe, 265
Whose young the hinds have stolen, yet unfledged.
Still flowed their tears abundantly; the sun
Would have gone down and left them weeping still,
Had not Telemachus at length inquired: —

"Dear father, tell me in what galley came 270
The mariners who brought thee. Of what race
Claim they to be? For certainly, I think,
Thou cam'st not hither travelling on foot."

Ulysses, the great sufferer, thus replied:
"My son, thou shalt be answered faithfully. 275
Men of a race renowned for seamanship,
Phæacians, brought me hither. They convey
Abroad the strangers coming to their isle,
And, bearing me in one of their swift barks
Across the sea, they landed me asleep 280
In Ithaca. Rich were the gifts they gave, —
Much brass and gold, and garments from the loom;

These, so the gods have counselled, lie concealed
Among the hollow rocks, and I am come,
Obeying Pallas, to consult with thee 285
How to destroy our enemies. Give now
The number of the suitors; let me know
How many there may be, and who they are,
That with a careful judgment I may weigh
The question whether we shall fall on them, — 290
We two alone, — or must we seek allies.”

Then spake discreet Telemachus again :
“ O father, I have heard of thy great fame
My whole life long, — how mighty is thy arm,
How wise thy counsels. Thou hast said great things, 295
And I am thunderstruck. It cannot be
That two alone should stand before a crowd
Of valiant men. They are not merely ten, —
These suitors, — nor twice ten, but many more ;
Hear, then, their number. From Dulichium come 300
Fifty-and-two, the flower of all its youth,
With whom are six attendants. Samos sends
Twice twelve, and twenty more Achaian chiefs
Come from Zacynthus. Twelve from Ithaca ;
The noblest of the isle are these, — with whom 305
Medon the herald comes, — a bard whose song

Is heavenly, — and two servants skilled to spread
The banquet. Should we in the palace halls
Assault all these, I fear lest the revenge
For all thy wrongs would end most bitterly 310
And grievously for thee. Now, if thy thought
Be turned to some ally, bethink thee who
Will combat for us with a willing heart.”

Again Ulysses, the great sufferer, spake :
“Then will I tell thee ; listen, and give heed. 315
Think whether Pallas and her father, Jove,
Suffice not for us. Need we more allies?”

And then discreet Telemachus rejoined :
“Assuredly the twain whom thou hast named
Are mighty as allies ; for though they sit 320
On high among the clouds, they yet bear rule
Both o’er mankind and o’er the living gods.”

Once more Ulysses, the great sufferer, spake :
“Not long will they avoid the fierce affray
When in my halls the strength of war is tried 325
Between me and the suitor crew. Now go
With early morning to thy home, and there
Mingle among the suitors. As for me,
The swineherd afterward shall lead me hence
To town, a wretched beggar seemingly, 330

And very old. If there they scoff at me
In mine own palace, let thy faithful heart
Endure it, though I suffer; though they seize
My feet, and by them drag me to the door,
Or strike at me with weapon-blades, look on 335
And bear it; yet reprove with gentle words
Their folly. They will never heed reproof;
The day of their destruction is at hand.
And this I tell thee further, and be sure
To keep my words in memory. As soon 340
As Pallas, goddess of wise counsel, gives
The warning, I shall nod to thee, and thou,
When thou perceivest it, remove at once
All weapons from my halls to a recess
High in an upper chamber. With soft words 345
Quiet the suitors when they ask thee why.
Say, 'I would take them where there comes no smoke,
Since now they seem no longer like to those
Left by Ulysses when he sailed for Troy,
But soiled and tarnished by the breath of fire. 350
This graver reason, also, Saturn's son
Hath forced upon my mind, — that ye by chance,
When full of wine and quarrelling, may wound
Each other, and disgrace the feast, and bring

Shame on your wooing ; for the sight of steel 355
 Draws men to bloodshed.' Say but this, and leave
 Two swords for us, two spears, two oxhide shields,
 Against the day of combat. Pallas then,
 And Jove the All-disposer, will unman
 Their hearts. Moreover, let me say to thee, — 360
 And keep my words in memory, — if thou be
 My son, and of my blood, let no man hear
 That now Ulysses is within the isle ;
 Let not Laertes hear of it, nor him
 Who keeps the swine, nor any of the train 365
 Of servants, nor Penelope herself,
 While thou and I alone search out and prove
 The women of the household, and no less
 The serving-men, to know who honors us,
 And bears us reverence in his heart, and who 370
 Contemns us, and dishonors even thee."

Then answered his illustrious son and said :
 " Father, thou yet wilt know my heart, and find
 That of a careless and too easy mood
 I am not ; but a search like this, I think, 375
 Would profit neither of us, and I pray
 That thou wilt well consider it. Long time
 Wouldst thou go wandering from place to place,

O'er thy estates, to prove the loyalty
Of every one, while in thy halls at ease 380
The suitors wastefully consume thy wealth.
Yet would I counsel that the women's faith
Be proved, that the disloyal may be marked
And the innocent go free. As for the men,
I would not now inquire from farm to farm ; 385
That may be done hereafter, if indeed
Thou hast a sign from ægis-bearing Jove."

So talked they with each other. The good ship
Which brought Telemachus and all his friends
From Pylos kept meantime upon its way 390
To Ithaca. There, entering the deep port,
The seamen hauled the black ship up the beach ;
And then the ready servants took away
The arms, and to the house of Clytius bore
The costly gifts. A herald from the ship 395
Went forward to the palace of the king
With tidings to the sage Penelope
That now her son was come and in the fields,
And that the ship at his command had reached
The city, lest the royal dame might feel 400
Fear for his safety, and give way to tears.
The herald and the noble swineherd met,

Each bearing the same message to the queen.
Entering the palace of the godlike king,
And standing midst the maids, the herald said : — 405

“O lady, thy beloved son is come.”

But close beside the queen the swineherd stood,
And told her everything which her dear son
Had bid him say ; and, having thus fulfilled
His errand, left the palace and its court. 410

Then were the suitors vexed and sorrowful,
And going from the palace, and without
The great wall that enclosed the court, sat down
Before the gates, and there Eurymachus,
The son of Polybus, harangued the throng : — 415

“Behold, my friends, Telemachus has done
A marvellous thing ; this voyage, which we thought
He could not make, is made. Now let us launch
A ship, the best that we can find, and man
With fishermen the benches, sending it 420
To find our friends, and hasten their return.”

Scarce had he spoken when Amphinomus,
In turning where he stood, beheld a bark
Enter the port's deep waters, with a crew
That furled the sails and held the oars in hand. 425
He laughed, well pleased, and to the suitors said : —

“There needs no message to be sent, for they
Are here already. Haply hath some god
Given them the knowledge, or perchance they saw,
But could not overtake, the prince’s ship.”

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He spake; they rose and hastened to the strand,
And quickly drew the galley up the beach.
The ready servants bore the arms away;
Then met they all in council, suffering none
Save of the suitor-train to meet with them, —
None, either young or old. Eupeithes’ son,
Antinoüs, standing forth, bespake them thus: —

435

“How strangely do the gods protect this man
From evil! All day long spy after spy
Has sat and watched upon the airy heights,
And when the sun was set we never slept
On land, but ever in our gallant ship
Sailed, waiting for the holy morn, and lay
In constant ambush for Telemachus,
To seize and to destroy him. Yet behold,
Some deity has brought him home. And now
Frame we a plan to cut off utterly
Telemachus, and leave him no escape;
For certainly I think that while he lives
The end we aim at cannot be attained.

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Shrewd is the youth in counsel and device,
And we no longer have, as once we had,
The people's favor. Let us quickly act,
Ere he can call a council of the Greeks.
That he will do without delay, and there 455
Will rise in wrath to tell them how we planned
His death by violence, and failed ; and they
Who hear assuredly will not approve
The plotted mischief. They may drive us forth
With outrage from our country to a land 460
Of strangers. Let us be the first to strike,
And slay him in the fields or on the way,
And, taking his possessions to ourselves,
Share equally his wealth. Then may we give
This palace to his mother, and the man 465
Whom she shall wed, whoever he may be.
Or if this plan mislike you, and ye choose
That he should live, and keep the fair estate
That was his father's, let us not go on
Thronging the palace to consume his wealth 470
In revelry, but each with liberal gifts
Woo her from his own dwelling ; and let him
Who gives most generously, and whom fate
Most favors, take the lady as his bride."

He spake, and all were mute. Amphinomus, 475
The illustrious son of royal Nisus, rose.
The grandson of Aretias, it was he
Who led the suitors from Dulichium's fields,
Grassy and rich in corn. Penelope
Liked best his words, for generous was his thought, 480
And with a generous purpose thus he spake : —

“Nay, friends, not mine is the advice to slay
Telemachus. It is a fearful thing
To take a royal life. Then let us first
Inquire the pleasure of the gods. For if 485
The oracles of mighty Jupiter
Approve it, I would do the deed myself,
Or bid another do it ; but if they
Consent not, 't is my counsel to forbear.”

He spake, and all approved. At once they rose, 490
And, entering the palace, sat them down
On shining thrones. Meantime Penelope
Had formed the purpose to appear before
The arrogant suitors, for the news was brought
Into her chamber of the plot to slay 495
Her son ; the herald Medon overheard,
And told her all. So to the hall she went
With her attendant maids. The glorious dame

Drew near the suitor-train, and took her stand
Beside a column of the stately pile, 500
And with a delicate veil before her cheeks
Began to speak, and chid Antinoüs thus : —
 “ Antinoüs, mischief-plotter, insolent !
The rumor is that thou excellest all
Of thy own age among the Ithacans 505
In understanding and in speech. Yet such
Thou never wert. Ferocious as thou art,
Why seek the death of my Telemachus,
And treat with scorn the suppliants of whose prayer
Jove is the witness? An unholy thing 510
It is when men against their fellow-men
Plot mischief. Dost thou then forget that once
Thy father came to us a fugitive,
In terror of the people, who were wroth
Because he joined the Taphian pirate-race, 515
And plundered the Thesprotians, our allies.
The people would have slain him, and have torn
His heart out, and have pillaged his large wealth ;
Ulysses checked their rage, and held them back,
Fierce as they were. Now thou dost waste his goods 520
Most shamefully, and woo his wife, and slay
His son, and multiply my woes. Cease now,

I charge thee, and persuade the rest to cease.”

Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,
Replied : “ O daughter of Icarius, sage 525
Penelope, take heart ; let no such thought
Possess thy mind. There is no man on earth,
Nor will there be, who shall lay violent hands
Upon Telemachus, thy son, while I
Am living, and yet keep the gift of sight. 530
I say, and will perform it, — his black blood
Shall flow and bathe my spear. Ulysses oft,
Spoiler of realms, would take me on his knee,
And put the roasted meats into my hands,
And give me ruddy wine. I therefore hold 535
Telemachus of all mankind most dear,
And I will bid him have no fear of death
From any of the suitors. If it come,
Sent by the gods, he cannot then escape.”

So spake he to appease her, while he planned 540
The murder of her son. The queen went up
To the fair upper chambers, and there wept
Ulysses, her dear spouse, till o’er her lids
The blue-eyed Pallas poured the balm of sleep.

At evening to Ulysses and his son 545
The noble swineherd went, while busily

They made the supper ready, having slain
A porker one year old. Then instantly
Stood Pallas by Ulysses, and put forth
Her wand and touched him, making him again 550
Old, and clad sordidly in beggar's weeds,
Lest that the swineherd, knowing at a look
His master, might not keep the knowledge locked
In his own breast, but, hastening forth betray
The secret to the chaste Penelope. 555

Then to the swineherd said Telemachus :
“ Noble Eumæus, welcome ; what reports
Are in the town ? Have those large-minded men,
The suitors, left their ambush and returned,
Or are they waiting yet for me to pass ? ” 560

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
“ Of that, indeed, I never thought to ask,
In going through the town. My only care
Was to return, as soon as I had given
My message, with such speed as I could make. 565
I met a messenger, a herald sent
By thy companions, who was first to tell
Thy mother of thy safe return. Yet this
I know, for I beheld it with my eyes.
When outside of the city, where the hill 570

Of Hermes stands, I saw a gallant bark
Entering the port, and carrying many men.
Heavy it was with shields and two-edged spears ;
"T was they, I thought, and yet I cannot tell."

He spake ; Telemachus the valiant looked 575
Upon his father with a smile unmarked
By good Eumæus. When their task was done,
And the board spread, they feasted. No one lacked
His portion of the common meal. Their thirst
And hunger satisfied, they laid them down 580
To rest, and so received the gift of sleep.

BOOK XVII.

NOW when the rosy-fingered Morn looked forth, —
The daughter of the Dawn, — Telemachus,
The dear son of the great Ulysses, bound
The shapely sandals underneath his feet,
And took the massive spear that fitted well
His grasp, and, as he stood in act to go
Up to the town, bespake the swineherd thus:—

“Father, I hasten to the town, that there
My mother may behold me; for I think
She will not cease to grieve, and fear, and weep,
Till her eyes rest on me. I leave with thee
The charge of leading our unfortunate guest
Into the city, there to beg his bread.
Whoever will may give him food and drink.
All men I cannot feed, and I have cares
Enough already. If he chafe at this,
The worse for him. I like to speak my mind.”

And thus Ulysses, the sagacious, spake :

“Nor do I wish, my friend, to loiter here.
Better it is for one like me to beg 20
In town than in the country. In the town,
Whoever chooses will bestow his dole ;
But here, if I remain about the stalls,
I am no longer of an age to do
All that a master may require. Go thou ; 25
This man, at thy command, will lead me hence,
As soon as I have warmed me at the fire,
And the air grows milder. This keen morning-cold
May end me, and the way, ye say, is long.”

He ended ; from the lodge Telemachus 30
Passed quickly, meditating to destroy
The suitors. Coming to his stately home,
He leaned his spear against a column's shaft,
And, crossing the stone threshold, entered in.
First Eurycleia, who had been his nurse, 35
Beheld him, as she spread the beautiful thrones
With skins, and ran to him with weeping eyes ;
And round him other handmaids of the house
Of resolute Ulysses thronged. They gave
Fond welcome, kissing him upon the brow 40
And shoulders. Issuing from her chamber next
The chaste Penelope, like Dian's self

In beauty, or like golden Venus, came,
And, weeping, threw her arms about her son,
And kissed him on his forehead and on both
His glorious eyes, and said, amidst her tears : — 45

“Light of my eyes! O my Telemachus!
Art thou, then, come? I never thought again
To see thee, when I heard thou hadst embarked
For Pylos, — secretly, and knowing me 50
Unwilling, — in the hope to gather there
Some tidings of thy father. Tell me now
All that has happened, all that thou hast seen.”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied :
“Nay, mother, waken not my griefs again, 55
Nor move my heart to rage. I have just now
Escaped a cruel death. But go and bathe,
And put fresh garments on, and when thou com'st
Into thy chamber with thy maidens, make
A vow to all the gods that thou wilt burn 60
A sacrifice of chosen hecatombs
When Jupiter shall have avenged our wrongs.
Now must I hasten to the market-place
In quest of one who came with me a guest
From Pylos. Him, with all my faithful crew, 65
I sent before me to this port, and bade

Piræus lead him to his own abode,
There to be lodged and honored till I came."

He spake, nor flew his words unheeded by.
The princess bathed, and put fresh garments on, 70
And vowed to all the gods a sacrifice
Of chosen hecatombs when Jupiter
Should punish the wrong-doers. While she prayed,
Telemachus went forth, his spear in hand.
Two fleet dogs followed him. Minerva shed 75
A godlike beauty o'er his form and face,
And all the people wondered as he came.
The suitors thronged around him with smooth words,
Yet plotting mischief in their hearts. He turned
From their assembly hastily, and took 80
His place where Mentor sat with Antiphus,
And Halitherses, — all his father's friends
And his from the beginning. While they asked
Of all that he had seen, Piræus came,
The famous spearman, bringing through the town 85
The stranger with him to the market-place.
Nor long Telemachus delayed, but came
To meet his guest, and then Piræus said : —
"Telemachus, despatch to where I dwell
Thy serving-women ; I would send to thee, 90

At once, the gifts which Menelaus gave."

And then discreet Telemachus replied :
"We know not yet, Piræus, what may be
The event ; and if the suitors privily
Should slay me in the palace, and divide 95
The inheritance among them, I prefer
That thou, instead of them, shouldst have the gifts ;
But should they meet the fate which I have planned,
And be cut off, then shalt thou gladly bring
The treasures, which I gladly will receive." 100

So spake the prince, and to the palace led
The unhappy man, his guest. When now they reached
The stately pile, they both laid down their cloaks
Upon the benches, and betook themselves
To the well-polished baths. The attendant maids 105
There ministered and smoothed their limbs with oil,
And each received a tunic at their hands,
And fleecy mantle. Then they left the baths
And took their seats. A damsel came, and poured
Water from a fair ewer wrought of gold 110
Into a silver basin for their hands,
And spread a polished table near their seats ;
And there the matron of the household placed
Bread, and the many dishes which her stores

Supplied. The queen was seated opposite, 115
Beside a column of the pile, and twirled
A slender spindle, while the son and guest
Put forth their hands and shared the meal prepared.
And when the calls of hunger and of thirst
Had ceased, thus spake the sage Penelope: — 120

“Telemachus, when I again go up
Into my chamber, I shall lay me down
Upon the couch which, since Ulysses sailed
For Troy with Atreus’ sons, has been to me
A couch of mourning, sprinkled with my tears. 125
And now thou hast not chosen to reveal,
Ere yet the haughty suitors throng again
Into these halls, what in thy voyage thou
Hast haply heard concerning his return.”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied: 130
“Then, mother, will I truly tell thee all.
We went to Pylos, and saw Nestor there,
The shepherd of the people. Kindly he
Received me in his stately home, as one
Might welcome back a wandering son returned 135
From foreign lands. Such welcome I received
Both from the king and his illustrious sons.
But he had heard, he said, from living man,

No tidings of the much-enduring chief
Ulysses, whether he were yet alive 140
Or dead. He therefore sent me with his steeds
And chariot to the court of Atreus' son,
The warlike Menelaus. There I saw
The Argive Helen, for whose sake the Greeks
And Trojans, by the appointment of the gods, 145
Suffered so much. The valiant king inquired
What wish of mine had brought me to the town
Of hallowed Lacedæmon. I replied,
And truly told him all, and everything
In order. Then he answered me, and said: — 150
 “‘So then! these men, unwarlike as they are,
Aspire to occupy a brave man's bed,
As when a hart hath left two suckling fawns,
Just born, asleep in a strong lion's lair,
And roams for pasturage the mountain slopes 155
And grassy lawns, the lion suddenly
Comes back, and makes a cruel end of both,
So will Ulysses bring a sudden doom
Upon the suitors. Would to Father Jove,
And Pallas, and Apollo, that the chief, 160
Returning mighty, as he was when once
In well-built Lesbos, at a wrestling-match,

He rose to strive with Philomelides,
And threw him heavily, and all the Greeks
Rejoiced, — would he might come as then he was ! 165
Short-lived would then the suitors be, and taste
A bitter marriage-feast. But now, to come
To what thou hast inquired, I will not seek
To turn from it, and talk of other things,
Nor will deceive. Of all that I was told 170
By the Ancient of the Deep, whose words are true,
I will not hide a single word from thee.
He saw thy father in an isle, he said,
A prey to wasting sorrows, and detained,
Unwilling, in the palace of the nymph 175
Calypso. To the country of his birth
He cannot come ; no ships are there with oars
And crew to bear him o'er the great wide sea.'

"Thus Menelaus, mighty with the spear,
The son of Atreus, said. And having now 180
Fulfilled my errand, I returned. The gods
Gave favoring winds, and sent me swiftly home.'

He ended, and the queen was deeply moved.
Then Theoclymenus, the godlike, said : —

"O gracious consort of Laertes' son, 185
King Menelaus knew not all. Hear now

What I shall say, — for I will prophesy,
And truly, nor will keep back ought from thee.

Let Jupiter, the mightiest of the gods,

And this thy hospitable board, and this 190

The hearth of great Ulysses, where I find

A refuge, be my witnesses, that now

Ulysses is in his own land again,

And sits or walks observant of the deeds

Of wrong, and planning vengeance, yet to fall 195

On all the suitors; such the augury

Which I beheld when in the gallant bark

I sat and told it to Telemachus."

And thus the sage Penelope replied :

"O stranger ! may thy saying be fulfilled ! 200

Then shalt thou have such thanks and such rewards

That all who greet thee shall rejoice with thee."

So talked they with each other. In the space

Before the palace of Ulysses stood

The suitors, pleased with hurling quoits and spears 205

On the smooth pavement, where their insolence

So oft was seen. But when the supper-hour

Was near, and from the fields the cattle came,

Driven by the herdsmen, Medon — he whom most

They liked of all the heralds, and who sat 210

Among them at the feast — bespake them thus : —

“Youths! since ye now have had your pastime here,
Come in, and help prepare the evening meal;
At the due hour a banquet is not ill.”

He spake; the suitors hearkened and obeyed, 215
And rose, and came into the halls, and laid
Their cloaks upon the benches and the thrones,
And slaughtered well-fed sheep and fatling goats,
And made a victim of a pampered brawn,
And a stalled ox, preparing for the feast. 220

Meantime Ulysses and that noble hind
The swineherd hastened to begin their walk
To town, and thus the master swineherd spake : —

“Since, stranger, ’t is thy wish to pass to-day
Into the city, as my master bade, — 225
Though I by far prefer that thou remain
A guardian of the stalls, yet much I fear
My master, and am sure that he would chide,
And harsh the upbraidings of a master are, —
Let us depart; the day is now far spent, 230
And chill will be the air of eventide.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :
“Enough; I know; thy words are heard by one
Who understands them. Let us then depart.

Lead thou the way; and if thou hast a staff, 235
Cut from the wood to lean on, give it me,
Since, as thou say'st, we have a slippery road."

He spake, and o'er his shoulders flung a scrip,
Old, cracked, and hanging by a twisted thong.
Eumæus gave the staff he asked, and both 240
Went forth; the dogs and herdsmen stayed to guard
The lodge. The swineherd led his master on
Townward, a squalid beggar to the sight,
And aged, leaning on a staff, and wrapped
In sordid rags. There by the rugged way, 245
As they drew near the town, they passed a fount
Wrought by the hand of man, and pouring forth
Its pleasant streams, from which the citizens
Drew water. Ithacus and Neritus
Founded it with Polyctor, and a grove 250
Of alders feeding on the moistened earth
Grew round it on all sides. The ice-cold rill
Gushed from a lofty rock, upon whose brow
An altar stood, at which the passers-by
Worshipped, and laid their offerings for the Nymphs. 255
There did Melanthius, son of Dolius, meet
The twain, as he was driving to the town
The finest goats of all the flocks, to make

A banquet for the suitors; with him went
Two shepherds, following the flock. As soon 260
As he beheld Eumæus and his guest,
He railed at them with rude and violent words,
That made the anger of Ulysses rise.

“ See that vile fellow lead the vile about !
Thus ever doth some god join like with like. 265
Thou worthless swineherd ! whither wouldst thou take
This hungry, haunting beggar-man, this pest
Of feasts, who at the posts of many a door
Against them rubs his shoulders, asking crusts,
Tripods or caldrons never. Shouldst thou leave 270
The wretch to me, to watch my stalls, and sweep
The folds, and bring fresh branches to the kids,
He might by drinking whey get stouter thighs.
But he has learned no good, and will refuse
To work ; he better likes to stroll about 275
With that insatiable stomach, asking alms
To fill it. Let me tell thee what is sure
To happen to him, should he ever come
Into the palace of the glorious chief
Ulysses. Many a footstool will be flung 280
Around him by the hands of those who sit
As guests, and they will tear the fellow’s sides.”

He spake, and in his folly thrust his heel
 Against the hero's thigh. The blow moved not
 Ulysses from his path, nor swerved he ought, 285
 But meditated whether with a blow
 Of his good staff to take the fellow's life,
 Or lift him in the air and dash his head
 Against the ground. Yet he endured the affront
 And checked his wrath. The swineherd spake, and chid
 The offender, and thus prayed with lifted hands: — 291

“Nymphs of the fountain, born to Jupiter!
 If e'er in sacrifice Ulysses burned
 To you the thighs of lambs and goats, o'erlaid
 With fat, be pleased to grant the prayer I make, 295
 That, guided by some deity, the chief
 May yet return. Then thy rude boasts would cease,
 Melanthius, which thou utterest in thy way
 From place to place while wandering through the town.
 Unfaithful shepherds make a perishing flock.” 300

Melanthius, keeper of the goats, rejoined: —
 “'T is wonderful how flippant is the cur,
 And shrewd! But I shall carry him on board
 A good black ship, far off from Ithaca,
 And there will sell him for a goodly price. 305
 Would that Apollo of the silver bow

Might in the palace slay Telemachus
This very hour, or that the suitors might,
As certainly as that the day which brings
Ulysses to his home will never dawn ! ” 310

He spake, and left them there. They followed on
Slowly. Melanthius hastened, and was soon
At the king's palace gate, and, entering, took
A seat right opposite Eurymachus,
Whose favorite he was. The attendants there 315
Brought meats, the matron of the household bread,
And both were set before them. Meantime stopped
Ulysses with the noble swineherd near
The palace, for around them in the air
Came the sweet murmurs of a lyre. Just then 320
Phemius, the minstrel, had begun his song,
Ulysses took the swineherd's hand, and said : —

“ Eumæus, this must be the noble pile
In which Ulysses dwelt, for easily
'T is known among the others that are near. 325
Rooms over rooms are here ; around its court
Are walls and battlements, and folding-doors
Shut fast the entrance ; no man may condemn
Its strength. And I perceive that many guests
Banquet within ; the smoke of fat goes up, 330

And the sweet lyre is heard ; the gods have given
Its music to accompany the feast."

And then, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
"Thou speakest rightly, and in other things
Thou art not slow of thought. Now let us think 335
What we shall do. First enter, if thou wilt,
The sumptuous rooms, while I remain without ;
Or, if it please thee, I will enter first,
While thou remainest ; yet delay not long,
Lest some one, seeing thee, should deal a blow, 340
Or drive thee hence. I pray thee, think of this."

Ulysses, the great sufferer, answered thus :
"Enough ; I know ; thy words are heard by one
Who understands them. Go before me, then,
And leave me here. I am not quite unused 345
To blows and stripes, and patient is my mood,
For greatly have I suffered, both at sea
And in the wars ; and I submit to bear
This also. But the stomach's eagerness
Is desperate, and is not to be withstood, 350
And many are the mischiefs which it brings
Upon the race of men ; it fits out fleets
That cross the barren deep arrayed for war,
And carry death and woe to hostile realms."

So talked the twain. A dog was lying near, 355
And lifted up his head and pricked his ears.
'T was Argus, which the much-enduring man
Ulysses long before had reared, but left
Untried, when for the hallowed town of Troy
He sailed. The young men oft had led him forth 360
In eager chase of wild goats, stags, and hares ;
But now, his master far away, he lay
Neglected, just before the stable doors,
Amid the droppings of the mules and beeves,
Heaped high till carried to the spacious fields 365
Of which Ulysses was the lord. There lay
Argus, devoured with vermin. As he saw
Ulysses drawing near, he wagged his tail
And dropped his ears, but found that he could come
No nearer to his master. Seeing this, 370
Ulysses wiped away a tear unmarked
By the good swineherd, whom he questioned thus : —
“Eumæus, this I marvel at, — this dog,
That lies upon the dunghill, beautiful
In form, but whether in the chase as fleet 375
As he is fairly shaped I cannot tell.
Worthless, perchance, as house-dogs often are,
Whose masters keep them for the sake of show.”

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
“The dog belongs to one who died afar. 380
Had he the power of limb which once he had
For feats of hunting when Ulysses sailed
For Troy and left him, thou wouldst be amazed
Both at his swiftness and his strength. No beast
In the thick forest depths which once he saw, 385
Or even tracked by footprints, could escape.
And now he is a sufferer, since his lord
Has perished far from his own land. No more
The careless women heed the creature’s wants ;
For, when the master is no longer near, 390
The servants cease from their appointed tasks,
And on the day that one becomes a slave
The Thunderer, Jove, takes half his worth away.”

He spake, and, entering that fair dwelling-place,
Passed through to where the illustrious suitors sat, 395
While over Argus the black night of death
Came suddenly as soon as he had seen
Ulysses, absent now for twenty years.
Telemachus, the godlike, was the first
To mark the swineherd coming through the hall, 400
And, nodding, called to him. The swineherd looked
About him, and beheld a seat on which

The carver of the feast was wont to sit,
Distributing the meats. He bore it thence
And placed it opposite Telemachus, 405
And at his table. Then he sat him down,
And thither came the herald, bringing him
A portion of the feast, and gave him bread
From the full canister. Soon after him
Ulysses entered, seemingly an old 410
And wretched beggar, propped upon a staff,
And wrapped in sordid weeds. He sat him down
On the ashen threshold, just within the doors,
And leaned against a shaft of cypress-wood,
Which some artificer had skilfully 415
Wrought by a line, and smoothed. Telemachus
Called to the swineherd, bade him come, and took
A loaf that lay in the fair canister,
And all the flesh which his two hands could grasp.
“Bear this to yonder stranger; bid him go 420
And ask a dole from every suitor here.
No beggar should be bashful in his need.”
He spake, the hind obeyed, and, drawing near
Ulysses, said to him in winged words:—
“These from Telemachus, who bids thee ask 425
A dole from every suitor, for he says

No beggar should be bashful in his need."

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :

"May Jove, the sovereign, make Telemachus

A happy man among the sons of men,

430

And grant him all his heart desires in life!"

He spake, and took the gift in both his hands,

And laid it down upon his tattered scrip

Close to his feet. Then, while the poet sang,

He ate, and, just as he had supped, the bard

435

Closed his divine recital. Then ensued

Great clamor in the hall, but Pallas came

And moved Ulysses to arise, and ask

From every suitor there a dole of bread,

That he might know the better from the worse,

440

Though none were to be spared. From right to left

He took his way, and asked of every man,

With outstretched hand, as if he had been long

A beggar. And they pitied him, and gave,

And looked at him with wonder, and inquired

445

One of another who he was, and whence.

Then spake Melanthius, keeper of the goats :—

"Give ear, ye suitors of the illustrious queen.

As to this stranger, I have seen him once.

The swineherd brought him ; but I know him not,

450

And of what race he is I cannot tell."

He spake; Antinoüs chid the swineherd thus:—

"Why hast thou brought him, too well known thyself?

Have we not vagabonds enough? enough

Of sturdy beggars, pests of every feast.

455

Or is it a light matter that they throng

Hither to waste the substance of thy lord,

And therefore thou art with this fellow here?"

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply:

"Antinoüs, high as is thy station, thou

460

Hast spoken ill. What man goes ever forth

To bid a stranger to his house, unless

The stranger be of those whose office is

To serve the people, be he seer, or leech,

Or architect, or poet heaven-inspired,

465

Whose song is gladly heard? All these are called

To feasts wherever men are found; but none

Call in the poor, to live upon their means.

Antinoüs, thou, of all the suitor-train,

Dost ever with the greatest harshness treat

470

The servants of Ulysses, chiefly me.

I heed it not while sage Penelope

Dwells in the palace with her godlike son."

Then interposed discreet Telemachus:

“Nay, have no strife of words with him, I pray. 475
Antinoüs takes delight in bitter words,
And rails, and stirs up railing in the rest.”
And then he turned, and thus with winged words
Bespake Antinoüs: “Truly thou dost care
For me as might a father for a son, 480
Bidding me drive a stranger from my door
With violent words,—which God forbid. Take now
Somewhat and give to him. I grudge it not,
Nay, I advise it. Fear not to offend
My mother, or displease a single one 485
Of all the household of the godlike chief,
Ulysses. But thou hast no thought of this.
It suits thee best to feast and never give.”

Antinoüs thus rejoined: “O utterer
Of big and braggart words! Telemachus, 490
If all the other suitors would bestow
As much as I will, he would not be seen
Within these halls for three months yet to come.”

So speaking, he brought forward to the sight,
From underneath the board, a stool, on which 495
Rested his dainty feet. The others all
Gave somewhat to Ulysses, till his scrip
Was filled with meat and bread. Then as he went

Back to the threshold, there to feast on what
The Greeks had given him in his rounds, he stopped 500
Beside Antinoös, and bespake him thus : —

“Give somewhat also, friend. Thou dost not seem
One of the humbler rank among the Greeks,
But of the highest. Kingly is thy look ;
It therefore will become thee to bestow 505
More freely than the rest, and I will sound
Thy praise through all the earth. Mine too was once
A happy lot, for I inhabited
A palace filled with goods, and often gave
To wanderers, whosoever they might be 510
That sought me out, and in whatever need.
And I had many servants, and large store
Of everything by which men live at ease
And are accounted rich. Saturnian Jove —
Such was his pleasure — brought me low ; for, moved 515
By him, I joined me to a wandering band
Of pirates, and to my perdition sailed
Upon a distant voyage to the coast
Of Egypt. In the river of that land
I stationed my good ships, and bade my men 520
Remain with them and watch them well. I placed
Sentries upon the heights. Yet confident

In their own strength, and rashly giving way
To greed, my comrades ravaged the fair fields
Of the Egyptians, slew them, and bore off 525
Their wives and little ones. The rumor reached
The city soon ; the people heard the alarm
And came together. With the dawn of day
All the great plain was thronged with horse and foot,
And gleamed with brass, while Jove, the Thunderer, sent
A deadly fear into our ranks, where none 531
Dared face the foe. On every side was death.
The Egyptians hewed down many with the sword,
And some they led away alive to toil
For them in slavery. Me my captors gave 535
Into a stranger's hands, upon his way
To Cyprus, where he reigned, a mighty king,
Demetor, son of Jasus. Thence at last
I came through many hardships to this isle."

Antinoüs lifted up his voice, and said : 540
"What god hath sent this nuisance to disturb
The banquet? Take thyself to the mid-hall,
Far from thy table, else expect to see
An Egypt and a Cyprus of a sort
That thou wilt little like. Thou art a bold 545
And shameless beggar. Thou dost take thy round

And ask from each, and foolishly they give,
And spare not nor consider ; well supplied
Is each, and freely gives what is not his."

Then sage Ulysses said as he withdrew :

550

"'T is strange ; thy mind agrees not with thy form.
Thou wouldst not give a suppliant even salt
In thine own house, — thou who, while sitting here,
Fed at another's table, canst not bear
To give me bread from thy well-loaded board."

555

He spake. Alcinoüs grew more angry still,
And frowned and answered him with winged words : —

"Dealer in saucy words ! I hardly think
That thou wilt leave this palace unchastised."

He spake, and raised the footstool in his hand,
And smote Ulysses on the lower part
Of the right shoulder. Like a rock he stood,
Unmoved beneath the blow Antinoüs gave,
But shook his head in silence as he thought
Of vengeance. Then, returning, he sat down
Upon the threshold, where he laid his scrip
Well filled, and thus bespake the suitor-train : —

560

565

"Hear me, ye suitors of the illustrious queen.
Grief or resentment no man feels for blows
Received by him while fighting for his own, —

570

His beeves or white-woolled sheep. But this man here,
Antinoüs, dealt that blow on me because
I have an empty stomach ; hunger brings
Great mischiefs upon men. If there be gods
Or furies who avenge the poor, may death
O'ertake Antinoüs ere his marriage-day !” 575

He ended. Then again Eupeithes' son,
Antinoüs, spake : “ Eat, stranger, quietly ;
Sit still, or get thee hence ; our young men else
Who hear thy words will seize thee by the feet 580
Or hands, and drag thee forth and flay thee there.”

He spake, and greatly were the rest incensed,
And one of those proud youths took up the word : —

“ Antinoüs, it was ill of thee to smite
That hapless wanderer. Madman ! what if he 585
Came down from heaven and were a god ! The gods
Put on the form of strangers from afar,
And walk our towns in many different shapes,
To mark the good and evil deeds of men.”

Thus spake the suitors, but he heeded not 590
Their words. Telemachus, who saw the blow,
Felt his heart swell with anger and with grief,
Yet from his eyelids fell no tear ; he shook
His head in silence, pondering to repay

The wrong. Meantime the sage Penelope 595
Heard of the stranger smitten in her halls,
And thus bespake the maidens of her train : —

“Would that Apollo, mighty with the bow,
Might smite thee also !” Then Eurynomè,
The matron of the household, said in turn : 600
“O, were our prayers but heard, not one of these
Should look upon the golden morn again !”

Then spake again the sage Penelope :
“Mother, they all are hateful ; every one
Plots mischief, but Antinoüs most of all ; 605
And he is like black death, to be abhorred.
A friendless stranger passes through these halls,
Compelled by need, and asks an alms of each,
And all the others give, and fill his scrip ;
Antinoüs flings a footstool, and the blow 610
Bruises the shoulder of the suppliant man.”

So talked they with each other where they sat
In the queen’s chamber, ’mid the attendant train
Of women, while meantime Ulysses took
The evening meal. The queen then bade to call 615
The noble swineherd, and bespake him thus : —

“My worthy friend Eumæus, go and bring
The stranger hither. I would speak with him,

And ask if anywhere he saw or heard
Ought of Ulysses ; for he seems like one 620
Whose wanderings have been in many lands.”

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst make reply :
“Would that these Greeks, O queen, would hold their
peace,

Then might this stranger in thy hearing speak
Words full of consolation. For three nights 625

I had him with me, for three days I made
My lodge his home, — for at the very first
He came to me, escaping from his ship, —
Nor when he left me had he told of all
That he had suffered. As a hearer looks 630

Upon a minstrel whom the gods have taught
To sing the poems that delight all hearts,
And, listening, longs to listen without end ;
So, as the stranger sat beneath my roof,
He held me charmed. He was the ancestral friend, 635

He said, of thy Ulysses, and his home
Was Crete, where dwells the stock of Minos yet.
From Crete he came, and much had suffered since,
Driven on from place to place. And he had heard
Some tidings of Ulysses yet alive — 640

So he affirmed — in a rich region near

The realm of the Thesprotians, and prepared
To bring much riches to his native isle."

Then spake the sage Penelope again :

"Go, call him hither, that he may relate 645
His story in my presence. Let these men,
As it may please them, sitting at our gates
Or in our halls, amuse themselves, for light
Are they of heart. Unwasted in their homes
Lie their possessions, and their bread and wine 650
Are only for their servants, while themselves
Frequent our palace, day by day, and slay
Our beeves and sheep and fatling goats, and feast,
And drink abundantly the dark red wine,
And all with lavish waste. No man is here, 655
Such as Ulysses was, to drive away
This pest from our abode. Should he return
To his own land, he and his son would take
Swift vengeance on the men who do him wrong."

She ended. Suddenly Telemachus 660
Sneezed loudly, so that all the palace rang ;
And, laughing as she heard, Penelope
Bespoke Eumæus thus with winged words : —

"Go, call the stranger. Dost thou not perceive
My son has sneezed as to confirm my words. 665

Not unfulfilled will now remain the doom
That waits the suitors ; none will now escape
Death and the Fates. This further let me say,
And thou remember it ; if what he tells
Be true, I will bestow on him a change
Of fair attire, a tunic and a cloak.”

670

She spake, the swineherd went, and, drawing near
Ulysses, said to him in winged words : —

“Stranger and father, sage Penelope,
The mother of the prince, hath sent for thee.
Though sorrowing, she is minded to inquire
What of her husband thou canst haply say ;
And should she find that all thy words are true,
She will bestow a tunic and a cloak,
Garments which much thou needest. For thy food,
What will appease thy hunger thou wilt find
Among the people ; ask, and each will give.”

675

680

Ulysses, much enduring man, replied :
“Eumæus, faithfully will I declare
All that I know to sage Penelope,
The daughter of Icarius. Well I knew
Her husband, and with like calamities
We both have suffered. But I greatly dread
This reckless suitor-crew, whose riotous acts

685

And violence reach to the iron heavens.

690

Even now, when that man dealt me, as I passed,

A painful blow, though I had done no harm,

None interposed, not even Telemachus,

In my defence. Now, therefore, ask, I pray,

Penelope that she will deign to wait

695

Till sunset in her rooms, though strong her wish

To hear my history. Of her husband then,

And his return, she may inquire, while I

Sit by the blazing hearth ; for scant have been

My garments, as thou knowest, since the day

700

When first I came, a suppliant, to thy door."

He spake ; the swineherd went, and as he crossed
The threshold of Penelope she said : —

"Thou bringst him not, Eumæus? What may be

The wanderer's scruple? Fear of some one here?

705

Or in a palace is he filled with awe?

To be a bashful beggar is most hard."

And thus, Eumæus, thou didst answer her : —

"Rightly he speaks, and just as one would think

Who shuns the encounter of disorderly men.

710

He prays that thou wilt wait till set of sun ;

And better were it for thyself, O queen,

To speak with him and hear his words alone."

Then spake discreet Penelope again :

“Whoe’er may be the stranger, not unwise 715
He seems ; for nowhere among men are done
Such deeds of wrong and outrage as by these.”

She spake, and the good swineherd, having told
The lady all, went forth among the crowd
Of suitors, drawing near Telemachus, 720
And bowed his head beside him that none else
Might hear, and said to him in winged words : —

“I go, my friend, to tend the swine and guard
What there thou hast, thy sustenance and mine.
The charge of what is here belongs to thee. 725
Be thy first care to save thyself, and watch
To see that mischief overtake thee not, —
For many are the Achaians plotting it,
Whom Jove destroy ere we become their prey !”

Then spake discreet Telemachus in turn : 730
“So be it, father, and, when thou hast supped,
Depart, but with the morning come, and bring
Choice victims for the sacrifice. The care
Of all things here is with the gods and me.”

He spake ; the swineherd sat him down again 735
Upon his polished seat, and satisfied
His appetite and thirst with food and wine.

Then he departed to his herd, and left
The palace and the court before it thronged
With revellers, who gave the hour to song,
And joined the dance ; for evening now was come.

BOOK XVIII.

THERE came a common beggar, wont to ask
Alms through the town of Ithaca, well known
For greediness of stomach, gluttonous
And a wine-bibber, but of little strength
And courage, though he seemed of powerful mould. 5
Arnæus was the name which at his birth
His mother gave him, but the young men called
The fellow Irus, for it was his wont
To go on errands, as a messenger,
When he was ordered. Coming now, he thought 10
To drive Ulysses out of his own house,
And railed at him, and said in winged words: —

“Hence with thee! leave the porch, old man, at once,
Lest thou be taken by the foot and dragged
Away from it. Dost thou not see how all 15
Around us nod, to bid me drag thee out?
I am ashamed to do it. Rise and go,
Else haply we may have a strife of blows.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, frowned and said :
“Wretch ! there is nothing that I do or say 20
To harm thee aught. I do not envy thee
What others give thee, though the dole be large ;
And ample is this threshold for us both.
Nor shouldst thou envy others, for thou seemst
A straggler like myself. The gods bestow 25
Wealth where they list. But do not challenge me
To blows, lest, aged as I am, thou rouse
My anger, and I make thy breast and lips
Hideous with blood. To-morrow then will be
A quiet day for me, since thou, I trust, 30
In all the time to come, wilt nevermore
Enter the palace of Laertes’ son.”

The beggar Irus angrily rejoined :
“Ye gods ! this glutton prattles volubly,
Like an old woman at the chimney-side. 35
Yet could I do him mischief, smiting him
On both his sides, and dashing from his cheeks
The teeth to earth, as men are wont to deal
With swine that eat the wheat. Now gird thyself,
Let these men see us fighting. How canst thou 40
Think to contend with one so young as I ?”

Thus fiercely did they wrangle as they stood

Beside the polished threshold and before
The lofty gates. The stout Antinoös heard,
And, laughing heartily, bespake the rest : —

45

“Here, friends, is what we never yet have had.
Behold the pleasant pastime which the gods
Provide for us. These men — the stranger here,
And Irus — quarrel, and will come to blows.
Let us stand by and bring the combat on.”

50

He spake. All rose with laughter and came round
The ragged beggars, while Eupeithes' son,
Antinoös, in these words harangued the rest : —

“Ye noble suitors, hear me. At the fire
Already lie the paunches of two goats,
Preparing for our evening meal, and both
Are filled with fat and blood. Whoever shows
Himself the better man in this affray,
And conquers, he shall take the one of these
He chooses, and shall ever afterward
Feast at our table, and no man but he
Shall ever come among us asking alms.”

55

60

He ended. All approved his words, and thus
Ulysses, craftily dissembling, said : —

“O friends, it is not well that one so old
As I, and broken by calamity,

65

Should fight a younger man ; but hunger bids,
And I may be o'ercome by blows. But now
Swear all a solemn oath, that none of you,
To favor Irus, wickedly will raise
His mighty hand to smite me, and so aid
My adversary to my overthrow."

70

He spake ; the suitor-train, assenting, took
The oath, and when they all were duly sworn,
The high-born prince Telemachus began : —

75

"O stranger, if thy manly heart be moved
To drive him hence, fear no one else of all
The Achaians. Whosoever strikes at thee
Has many to contend with. I am here
The host. Antinoüs and Eurymachus,
Wise men and kings, agree with me in this."

80

He spake, and all approved. Ulysses drew
And girt his tatters round his waist and showed
His large and shapely thighs. Unclothed appeared
His full broad shoulders, and his manly breast
And sinewy arms. Minerva stood by him,
And with a mighty breadth of limb endued
The shepherd of the people. Earnestly
The suitors gazed, and wondered at the sight,
And each one, turning to his neighbor, said : —

85

90

“Irus, poor Irus, on himself has drawn
An evil fate, for what a sinewy thigh
His adversary shows beneath his rags!”

So talked they, while the heart of Irus sank
Within him; yet the attendants girding him
Forcibly drew him forward, sore afraid,
The muscles quivering over every limb.
And then Antinoüs spake, and chid him thus:—

95

“Now, boaster, thou deservest not to live,
Nay, nor to have been born, if thou dost fear
And quake at meeting one so old as he,
So broken with the hardships he has borne.
And now I tell thee what will yet be done,
Should he approve himself the better man,
And conquer. I will have thee sent on board
A galley to Epirus, and its king,
The foe of all men living, Echetus,
And he will pare away thy nose and ears
With the sharp steel, and, wrenching out the parts
Of shame, will cast them to be torn by dogs.”

100

105

110

He spake, and Irus shook through all his frame
With greater terror, yet they dragged him on
Into the midst. Both champions lifted up
Their arms. The godlike, much-enduring man,

Ulysses, pondered whether so to strike 115
His adversary that the breath of life
Might leave him as he fell, or only smite
To stretch him on the earth. As thus he mused,
The lighter blow seemed wisest, lest the Greeks
Should know who dealt it. When the hands of both 120
Were thus uplifted, Irus gave a blow
On his right shoulder, while Ulysses smote
Irus beneath the ear, and broke the bone
Within, and brought the red blood from his mouth.
He fell amid the dust, and shrieked and gnashed 125
His teeth, and beat with jerking feet the ground.
The suitor-train threw up their hands and laughed
Till breathless, while Ulysses seized his feet
And drew him o'er the threshold to the court
And the porch doors, and there, beside the wall, 130
Set him to lean against it, gave a staff
Into his hands, and said in winged words:—

“Sit there, and scare away the dogs and swine,
But think not, wretched creature, to bear rule
Over the stranger and the beggar tribe, 135
Or worse than this may happen to thee yet.”

He spake, and o'er his shoulders threw the scrip
That yawned with chinks, and by a twisted thong

Was fastened ; then he turned to take his seat
Upon the threshold, while the suitor-train 140
Went back into the palace with gay shouts
Of laughter, and bespoke him blandly thus : —

“Stranger, may Jove and all the other gods
Grant thee what thou desirest, and whate’er
Is pleasant to thee ! Thou hast put an end 145
To this importunate beggar’s rounds among
The people. We shall send him off at once
Into Epirus, and to Echetus,
Its king, the foe of every living man.”

So talked the suitors, and the omen made 150
Ulysses glad. Meantime Antinoüs placed
The mighty paunch before the victor, filled
With blood and fat, and from the canister
Amphinomus brought forth two loaves, and raise
A golden cup and drank to him, and said : — 155

“Hail, guest and father ! happy be thy days
Henceforth, though dark with many sorrows now !”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus : —
“Amphinomus, thou seemest most discreet,
And such thy father is, of whom I hear 160
A worshipful report, the good and rich
Dulichian Nisus. Thou, as I am told,

Art son to him, and thou art seemingly
A man of pertinent speech. I therefore say
To thee, and bid thee hear and mark me well, 165
No being whom earth nourishes to breathe
Her air and move upon her face is more
The sport of circumstance than man. For while
The gods give health, and he is strong of limb,
He thinks no evil in the coming days 170
Will overtake him. When the blessed gods
Visit him with afflictions, these he bears
Impatiently and with a fretful mind.
Such is the mood of man, while yet he dwells
On earth ; it changes as the All-Father gives 175
The sunshine or withholds it. I was once
Deemed fortunate among my fellow-men,
And many things that were unjust I did ;
For in my strength and in my father's power,
And valor of my brothers, I had put 180
My trust. Let no man, therefore, dare to be
Unjust in aught, but tranquilly enjoy
Whatever good the gods vouchsafe to give.
Yet are these suitors guilty of foul wrong,
Wasting the substance and dishonoring 185
The wife of one who will not, as I deem,

Remain long distant from his friends and home,
But is already near. O, may some god
Remove thee from this danger to thy home!
Nor mayst thou meet him when he shall return 190
To his own land. For when he comes once more
Beneath this roof, and finds the suitors here,
Not without bloodshed will their parting be."

He spake, and, pouring out a part, he drank
The wine, and gave the goblet to the prince, 195
Who crossed the hall, and sorrowfully shook
His head, for now already did his heart
Forebode the coming evil. Not by this
Did he escape his death. Minerva laid
A snare for him, that he might fall beneath, 200
The strong arm of Telemachus. He went
And took the seat from which he lately rose.

Then blue-eyed Pallas moved Penelope,
Sage daughter of Icarius, to appear
Before the suitors, that their base intent 205
Might be more fully seen, and she might win
More honor from her husband and her son.
Wherefore she forced a laugh, and thus began: —

"Eurynomè, I would at length appear,
Though not till now, before the suitor-train, 210

Detested as they are. I there would speak
A word of timely warning to my son,
And give him counsel not to trust himself
Too much among the suitors, who are fair
In speech, but mean him foully in their hearts.” 215

Eurynomè, the household matron, said :
“ Assuredly, my child, thou speakest well.
Go now, and warn thy son, and keep back naught.
First bathe, and, ere thou go, anoint thy cheeks,
Nor show them stained with tears. It is not well 220
To sorrow without end. For now thy son
Is grown, and thou beholdest him at length
What thou didst pray the gods, when he was born,
That he might yet become, a bearded man.”

And then the sage Penelope rejoined : 225
“ Though anxious for my sake, persuade me not,
Eurynomè, to bathe, nor to anoint
My cheeks with oil. The gods inhabiting
Olympus took away their comeliness
When in his roomy ships my husband sailed ; 230
But bid Antinoe come, and call with her
Hippodameïa, that they both may stand
Beside me in the hall. I will not go
Alone among the men, for very shame.”

She spake, the aged dame went forth to bear 235
The message, and to bring the women back.
While blue-eyed Pallas had yet other cares,
She brought a balmy sleep, and shed it o'er
The daughter of Icarius, as she lay
Reclined upon her couch, her limbs relaxed 240
In rest. The glorious goddess gave a dower
Of heavenly graces, that the Achaian chiefs
Might look on her amazed. She lighted up
Her fair face with a beauty all divine,
Such as the queenly Cytherea wears 245
When in the mazes of the dance she joins
The Graces. Then she made her to the sight
Of loftier stature and of statelier size,
And fairer than the ivory newly carved.
This having done, the gracious power withdrew, 250
While from the palace came the white-armed maids,
And prattled as they came. The balmy sleep
Forsook their mistress at the sound. She passed
Her hands across her cheeks, and thus she spake : —
“ ’T was a sweet sleep that, in my wretchedness, 255
Wrapped me just now. Would that, this very hour,
The chaste Diana by so soft a death
Might end me, that my days might be no more

Consumed in sorrow for a husband lost,
Of peerless worth, the noblest of the Greeks.” 260

She spake, and from the royal bower went down,
Yet not alone ; two maidens went with her.
And when that most august of womankind
Drew near the suitors, at the door she stopped
Of that magnificent hall, and o’er her cheeks 265
Let fall the lustrous veil, while on each side
A modest maiden stood. The suitors all
Felt their knees tremble, and were sick with love,
And all desired her. Then the queen bespake
Telemachus, her well-beloved son : — 270

“Telemachus, thy judgment is not firm,
Nor dost thou think aright. While yet a boy
Thy thought was wiser. Now that thou art grown,
And on the verge of manhood, so that one
Who comes from far and sees thy noble part 275
And stature well may say thou art the son
Of a most fortunate father, yet to think
And judge discreetly thou art not as then,
For what a deed is this which has been done
Even here ! Thou hast allowed a stranger guest 280
To be assaulted rudely. How is this ?
If one who sits a guest beneath our roof

Be outraged thus, be sure it brings to thee
Great shame and rank dishonor among men."

To this discreet Telemachus replied :

285

"Mother, I cannot take it ill that thou
Shouldst be offended. But of many things
I have a clear discernment, and can weigh
The good and bad. I was till now a child,
Yet even now I cannot always see

290

The wiser course. These men bewilder me,
As, sitting side by side, they lay their plots
Against me, and I have no helper here.

When Irus and the stranger fought, the strife
Had no such issue as the suitors wished.

295

The stranger conquered. Would to Father Jove,
To Pallas and Apollo, that the crew

Of suitors here might sit with nodding heads
Struck down upon the spot, within these halls

Or in the courts, and all with powerless limbs,
As Irus sits beside the gate and nods,

300

Like one o'ercome with wine, nor can he stand
Upon his feet, nor go to where he dwells,
If home he has, so feeble are his limbs."

So talked the twain awhile ; then interposed
Eurymachus, and thus bespake the queen : —

305

“Sage daughter of Icarius! if all those
Who in Iasian Argos have their homes
Should once behold thee, a still larger crowd
Of suitors would to-morrow come and feast 310
Within thy halls, so much dost thou excel
In mind and form and face all womankind.”

To this the sage Penelope replied:
“Eurymachus, the immortals took away
Such grace of form and face as once was mine, 315
What time the sons of Argos sailed for Troy,
And with them went Ulysses, my espoused.
Should he return, and take again in charge
My household, greater would my glory be,
And prized more highly. I am wretched now, 320
Such woes the gods have heaped upon my head.
He, when he left his native island, grasped
My right hand at the wrist, and said to me:
‘Think not, dear wife, that all the well-armed Greeks
Will come back safe from Troy. The Trojan men, 325
They say, are brave in war, expert to cast
The spear and wing the arrow, skilled to rein
The rapid steeds by which the bloody strife
Of battle-fields is hurried to its close;
And therefore whether God will bring me back, 330

Or I shall fall in Troy, I cannot know.

Take charge of all things here. I leave with thee

My father and my mother in these halls.

Be kind to them as now, nay, more than now,

Since I shall not be here. When thou shalt see

335

My son a bearded man, take to thyself

A husband, whom thou wilt, and leave thy house.'

Such were his words, and they have been fulfilled.

The night will come in which I must endure

This hateful marriage, wretched that I am,

340

To whom the will of Jupiter forbids

All consolation, and this bitter thought

Weighs evermore upon my heart and soul.

The custom was not thus in other times ;

When suitors wooed a noble wife, the child

345

Of some rich house, contending for her smile,

They came with beeves and fatling sheep to feast

The damsel's friends, and gave munificent gifts,

But wasted not the wealth that was not theirs."

She spake, Ulysses was rejoiced to see

350

That thus she sought to draw from each a gift,

With fair and artful words. Yet were his thoughts

Intent on other plans. Eupeithes' son,

Antinoös, thus made answer to the queen : —

“Sage daughter of Icarius, only deign
To take the gifts which any of the Greeks
Will bring, — nor is it gracious to reject
A present, — yet be sure we go not hence,
To our estates nor elsewhere, till thou make
A bridegroom of the best Achaian here.” 355

So spake Antinoös. All approved his words,
And each sent forth a herald for his gift.
The herald of Antinoös brought to him
A robe of many colors, beautiful
And ample, with twelve golden clasps, which each 365
Had its well-fitted eye. Eurymachus
Received a golden necklace, richly wrought,
And set with amber beads, that glowed as if
With sunshine. To Eurydamas there came
A pair of ear-rings, each a triple gem, 370
Daintily fashioned and of exquisite grace.
Two servants bore them. From Pisander's house —
Son of the Prince Polyctor — there was brought
A collar of rare beauty. Thus did each
Bestow a different yet becoming gift. 375
And then that most august of women went
Back to the upper chambers with her maids,
Who bore the sumptuous presents, while below

The suitors turned them to the dance and song,
Amused till evening came. Its darkness stole 380
Over their pastime. Then they brought and placed
Three hearths to light the palace, heaping them
With wood, well dried and hard and newly cleft.
With this they mingled flaming brands. The maids
Of the great sufferer, Ulysses, fed 385
The fire by turns. To them the hero spake : —

“Ye maidens of a sovereign absent long,
Withdraw to where your high-born mistress sits ;
There turn the spindle, seeking to amuse
Her lonely hours ; there comb with your own hands 390
The fleece, and I will see that these have light.
Even though they linger till the Morn is here
In her bright car, they cannot overcome
My patience. I am practised to endure.”

So spake he, and the maidens, as they heard, 395
Cast at each other meaning looks, and laughed,
And one Melantho, of the rosy cheeks,
Railed at him impudently. She was born
To Dolius, but Penelope had reared
The damsel as a daughter of her own, 400
And given her, for her pleasure, many things ;
Yet for the sorrows of Penelope

Melantho little cared. Eurymachus
Had made the girl his paramour. She spake,
And chid Ulysses with unmannerly words : — 405

“ Outlandish wretch ! thou must be one whose brain
Is turned, since thou wilt neither go to sleep
Within a smithy, nor in any place
Of public shelter, but wilt stay and prate
Among this company with no restraint 410
Or reverence. Either wine has stolen away
Thy senses, or thy natural mood, perchance,
Prompts thee to chatter idly. Art thou proud
Of conquering Irus, that poor vagabond ?
Beware lest some one of robuster arms 415
Than Irus seize and thrust thee out of doors
With a bruised head and face begrimed with blood.”

The sage Ulysses frowned on her and said :
“ Impudent one, Telemachus shall hear
From me the saucy words which thou hast said, 420
And he will come and hew thee limb from limb.”

He spake ; the damsels, frightened at his words,
Fled through the hall, and shook in every limb
With terror, lest his threat should be fulfilled.
He meantime stood beside the kindled hearths 425
And fed the flames, and, looking on the crowd

Of suitors, brooded in his secret heart
O'er plans that would not fail to be fulfilled.

But Pallas suffered not the suitors yet
To cease from railing speeches, all the more 430
To wound the spirit of Laertes' son.

Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,
Began to scoff at him, and thus he spake
To wake the ready laughter of the rest : —

“Hear me, ye suitors of the illustrious queen. 435
I speak the thought that comes into my mind.
Led by some god, no doubt, this man has come
Into the palace ; for the light we have
Of torches seems to issue from the crown
Of his bald pate, a head without a hair.” 440

So said Eurymachus, and then bespake
Ulysses, the destroyer of walled towns : —

“Stranger, if I accept thee, wilt thou serve
Upon the distant parts of my estate ?
There shalt thou have fair wages, and shalt bring 445
The stones in heaps together, and shalt plant
Tall trees, and I will feed thee through the year,
And give thee clothes, and sandals for thy feet.
But thou art used, no doubt, to idle ways,
And never dost thou work with willing hands, 450

But dost prefer to roam the town and beg,
Purveying for thy gluttonous appetite."

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus : —

"Eurymachus, if we were matched in work
Against each other in the time of spring 455
When days are long, and both were mowing grass,
And I had a curved scythe in hand and thou
Another, that we might keep up the strife
Till nightfall, fasting, 'mid the abundant grass ;
Or if there were a yoke of steers to drive, 460
The sturdiest of their kind, sleek, large, well fed,
Of equal age, and equal strength to bear
The labor, and both strong, and if the field
Were of four acres, with a soil through which
The plough could cleave its way, — then shouldst thou see
How evenly my furrow would be turned. 466
Or should the son of Saturn send to-day
War from abroad, and I had but a shield,
Two spears, and, fitted to my brows, a helm
Of brass, thou wouldst behold me pressing on 470
Among the foremost warriors, and would see
No cause to rail at my keen appetite.
But arrogantly thou dost bear thyself,
And pitilessly ; thou in thine own eyes

Art great and mighty, since thou dost consort 475
With few, and those are not the best of men.
Yet should Ulysses come to his own land,
These gates that seem so wide would suddenly
Become too narrow for thee in thy flight."

He spake. Eurymachus grew yet more wroth, 480
And frowned on him, and said in winged words: —

"Wretch! I shall do thee mischief. Thou art bold,
And babblest unabashed among us all.
The wine, perhaps, is in thy foolish head,
Or thou art always thus, and ever prone 485
To prattle impudently. Art thou proud
Of conquering Irus, that poor vagabond?"

Thus having said, he brandished in the air
A footstool; but Ulysses, to escape
The anger of Eurymachus, sat down 490
Before the knees of the Dulichian prince,
Amphinomus. The footstool flew, and struck
On the right arm the cupbearer. Down fell
The beaker ringing; he who bore it lay
Stretched in the dust. Then in those shadowy halls 495
The suitors rose in tumult. One of them
Looked at another by his side, and said: —

"Would that this vagabond had met his death

Ere he came hither. This confusion, then,
Had never been. 'T is for a beggar's sake 500
We wrangle, and the feast will henceforth give
No pleasure; we shall go from bad to worse."

Then rose in majesty Telemachus,
And said: "Ye are not in your senses sure,
Unhappy men, who cannot eat and drink 505
In peace. Some deity, no doubt, has moved
Your minds to frenzy. Now, when each of you
Has feasted well, let each withdraw to sleep,
Just when he will. I drive no man away."

He spake; the suitors heard, and bit their lips, 510
And wondered at Telemachus, who spake
So resolutely. Then Amphinomus,
The son of Nisus Aretiades,
Stood forth, harangued the suitor crowd, and said: —

"O friends! let no one here with carping words 515
Seek to deny what is so justly said,
Nor yet molest the stranger, nor do harm
To any of the servants in the halls
Of the great chief Ulysses. Now let him
Who brings the guests their wine begin and fill 520
The cups, that, pouring to the gods their part,
We may withdraw to sleep. The stranger here

Leave we within the palace, and in charge
Of him to whom he came, Telemachus.”

He ended. All were pleased, and Mutlus then, 525
Hero and herald from Dulichium’s coast,
And follower of the prince Amphinomus,
Mingled a jar of wine, and went to each,
Dispensing it. They to the blessed gods
Poured first a part, and then they drank themselves 530
The generous juice. And when the wine was poured,
And they had drunk what each desired, they went
Homeward to slumber, each in his abode.

BOOK XIX.

NOW was the godlike chief Ulysses left
In his own palace, planning, with the aid
Of Pallas, to destroy the suitor-train,
And thus bespake his son with winged words: —

“Now is the time, Telemachus, to take 5
The weapons that are here, and store them up
In the inner rooms. Then, if the suitors ask
The reason, answer them with specious words :
Say, ‘I have put them where there comes no smoke,
Since even now they do not seem the arms 10
Left by Ulysses when he sailed for Troy,
So tarnished are they by the breath of fire ;
And yet another reason sways my mind,
The prompting of some god, that ye, when flushed
With wine and in the heat of a dispute, 15
May smite and wound each other, and disgrace
The banquet and your wooing ; for the sight
Of steel doth draw men on to violence.’ ”

He ended, and Telemachus obeyed
His father's words, and calling forth his nurse, 20
The aged Eurycleia, said to her : —

“Go, nurse, and see the women all shut up
In their own place, while in our inner room
I lay away my father's beautiful arms,
Neglected long, and sullied by the smoke, 25
While he was absent. I was then a child,
But now would keep them from the breath of fire.”

And thus the nurse, Dame Eurycleia, said :
“Would that at length, my child, thou didst exert
Thy proper wisdom here, and take in charge 30
Thy house and thy possessions. But who goes
With thee to bear a torch, since none of these,
Thy handmaids, are allowed to light thy way?”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied :
“This stranger. No man may be idle here 35
Who eats my bread, though from a distant land.”

He spake, nor flew his words in vain. The nurse
Closed all the portals of that noble pile.
Ulysses and his glorious son in haste
Bore off the helmets, and the bossy shields, 40
And the sharp spears, while Pallas held to them
A golden lamp, that shed a fair clear light.

Then to his father spake Telemachus : —

“Father! my eyes behold a marvel. All
The palace walls, each beautiful recess, 45
The fir-tree beams, the aspiring columns, shine,
Before my eyes, as with a blaze of fire.
Some god is surely here, some one of those
Who make their dwelling in the high broad heaven.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus : 50
“Keep silence; give thy thought no speech, nor ask
Concerning aught. Such is the wont of those
Who dwell upon Olympus. Now withdraw
To rest upon thy couch, while I remain,
For I would move thy mother and her maids 55
To ask of what concerns me. She, I deem,
Full sadly will inquire of many things.”

He spake; Telemachus departed thence,
By torchlight, to his chamber, there to rest
Where he was wont to lie when gentle sleep 60
Came over him. There lay he down to wait
The hallowed morning, while Ulysses, left
Within the palace, meditated still
Death to the suitors with Minerva's aid.

The sage Penelope now left her bower; 65
Like Dian or like golden Venus came

The queen. Beside the hearth they placed for her
The throne where she was wont to sit, inlaid
With ivory and silver, which of yore
The artisan Icmalius wrought. They laid 70
Close to the throne a footstool, over which
Was spread an ample fleece. On this sat down
The sage Penelope. Her white-armed train
Of handmaids came with her ; they cleared away
The abundant feast, and bore the tables off, 75
And cups from which those insolent men had drunk ;
They laid upon the ground the lighted brands,
And heaped fresh fuel round them, both for light
And warmth. And now Melantho once again
Bespake Ulysses with unmannerly words : — 80

“Stranger, wilt thou forever be a pest,
Ranging the house at night to play the spy
Upon the women ? Leave the hall, thou wretch !
And gorge thyself without, else wilt thou go
Suddenly, driven by blows and flaming brands.” 85

The sage Ulysses frowned on her, and said :
“Pert creature ! why so fiercely rail at me ?
Is it that I am squalid and ill-clad,
And forced by want to beg from hand to hand ?
Such is the fate of poor and wandering men. 90

I too was opulent once, inhabiting
A plenteous home among my fellow-men,
And often gave the wanderer alms, whoe'er
He might be and in whatsoever need ;
And I had many servants, and large store 95
Of things by which men lead a life of ease
And are called rich. But Jupiter, the son
Of Saturn, put an end to this, for so
It pleased the god. Now, therefore, woman, think
That thou mayst lose the beauty which is now 100
Thy pride among the serving-women here ;
Thy mistress may be wroth, and make thy life
A hard one ; or Ulysses may come back, —
And there is hope of that. Or if it be
That he has perished, and returns no more, 105
There still remains his son Telemachus,
Who by Apollo's grace is now a man,
And no one of the women in these halls
May think to misbehave, and yet escape
His eye, for he no longer is a boy." 110

He spake ; Penelope, the prudent, heard,
And, calling to her maid, rebuked her thus : —

“ O bold and shameless ! I have taken note
Of thy behavior ; thou hast done a wrong

For which thy head should answer. Well thou know'st,
For thou hast heard me say, that I would ask 116
The stranger in these halls if aught he knows
Of my Ulysses, for whose sake I grieve."

Then to the matron of the household turned
The queen, and thus bespoke Eurynomè: — 120

"Bring now a seat, Eurynomè, and spread
A fleece upon it, where the stranger guest
May sit at ease, and hear what I shall say,
And answer me, for I have much to ask."

She spake; the ancient handmaid brought with speed
A polished seat, and o'er it spread a fleece. 126
Ulysses, much enduring chief, sat down,
And thus the sage Penelope began: —

"First will I ask thee who thou art, and whence,
Where is thy birthplace, and thy parents who?" 130

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:
"O lady, none in all the boundless earth
Can speak of thee with blame. Thy fame has reached
To the great heavens. It is like the renown
Of some most excellent king, of godlike sway 135
O'er many men and mighty, who upholds
Justice in all his realm. The dark-soiled earth
Brings wheat and barley forth; the trees are bowed

With fruit ; the meadows swarm with noble herds,
The sea with fish, and under his wise reign 140
The people prosper. Therefore ask, I pray,
Of other things, while I am underneath
Thy palace-roof, but of my race and home
Inquire not, lest thou waken in my mind
Unhappy memories. I am a man 145
Of sorrow, and it would become me ill
To sit lamenting in another's house
And shedding tears. Besides, a grief indulged
Doth grow in violence. Thy maids would blame,
And thou perhaps, and ye would call my tears 150
The maudlin tears of one o'ercome with wine."

Then spake the sage Penelope again :
"Stranger, such grace of feature and of form
As once I had the immortals took away,
What time the Argive warriors sailed for Troy, 155
And my Ulysses with them. Could he now
Return to rule my household as of yore,
The wider and the brighter were my fame.
But now I lead a wretched life, so great
And many are the evils which some god 160
Heaps on me. For the chieftains who bear sway
Over the isles — Dulichium, and the fields

Of Samos, and Zacynthus dark with woods,
 And those who rule in sunny Ithaca —
 Woo me against my will, and waste away 165
 My substance. Therefore have I small regard
 For strangers and for suppliants, and the tribe
 Of heralds, servants of the public weal,
 But, pining for Ulysses, wear away
 My life. The suitors urge the marriage rite, 170
 And I with art delay it. Once some god
 Prompted me to begin an ample web,
 Wide and of subtle texture, in my rooms.
 And then I said: ‘Youths, who are pressing me
 To marriage, since Ulysses is no more, 175
 Urge me no further till I shall complete —
 That so the threads may not be spun in vain —
 This shroud for old Laertes, when grim fate
 And death’s long sleep at last shall overtake
 The hero; else among the multitude 180
 Of Grecian women I shall bear the blame,
 If one whose ample wealth so well was known
 Should lie in death without a funeral robe.’
 I spake, and easily their minds were swayed
 By what I said, and I began to weave 185
 The ample web, but ravelled it again

By torchlight every evening. For three years
I foiled them thus; but when the fourth year came,
And brought its train of hours and changing moons,
And many days had passed, they came on me, 190
And through my maidens' fault, a careless crew,
They caught me at my fraud, and chid me sore.
So, though unwilling, I was forced to end
My task, and cannot longer now escape
The marriage, nor is any refuge left. 195
My parents both exhort me earnestly
To choose a husband, and my son with grief
Beholds the suitors wasting his estate,
And he already is a man and well
Can rule his household; Jupiter bestows 200
Such honor on him. Now, I pray, declare
Thy lineage, for thou surely art not sprung
From the old fabulous oak, nor from a rock."

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her :
"O royal consort of Laertes' son ! 205
Wilt thou still ask my lineage? I will then
Disclose it, but thou wakest in my heart
New sorrows. So it ever is with one
Who long, like me, is far away from home,
Wandering in many realms, and suffering much ; 210

But since thou dost require it, thou shalt hear.

“Crete is a region lying in the midst
Of the black deep, a fair and fruitful land,
Girt by the waters. Many are the men,
Nay, numberless, who make it their abode, 215
And ninety are its cities. Different tongues
Are spoken by the dwellers of the isle.
In part they are Achaians, and in part
Are Cretans of the soil, a gallant stock ;
There dwell Cydonians, Dorians of three tribes, 220
And proud Pelasgians. Their great capital
Is Cnossus, where the monarch Minos dwelt,
He who at every nine years’ end conferred
With Jove almighty ; and to him was born
Deucalion, my brave father, who begat 225
Me and Idomeneus, the King of Crete.
To Ilium in his beakèd galleys sailed
Idomeneus with Atreus’ sons. My name —
A name well known — is Æthon. ’T was at Crete
I saw Ulysses, who received from me 230
The welcome due a guest. A violent wind
Had driven him from Maleia and the course
That led to Ilium, and had carried him
To Crete, and lodged him in the dangerous port

Amnisus, close to Ilithyia's cave, 235
Where scarce his fleet escaped the hurricane.
Thence came he to the city, and inquired
For King Idomeneus, who was, he said,
His dear and honored guest ; but he had sailed
Ten days before, perhaps eleven, for Troy, 240
In his beaked galleys. To the palace there
I led Ulysses, and with liberal cheer
Welcomed the chief, for plentifully stored
The royal dwelling was. I also gave
Meal from the public magazines to him 245
And those who followed him, and dark red wine
Brought from the country round, and beeves to slay
In sacrifice, that so their hearts might feel
No lack of aught. Twelve days the noble Greeks
Remained with us. A violent north-wind, 250
Which scarcely suffered them to stand upright
On shore, withstood them. Some unfriendly power
Had bid it blow ; but on the thirteenth day
Its fury ceased, and the fleet put to sea."

Thus went he on, inventing tales that seemed 255
Like truth. She listened, melting into tears
That flowed as when on mountain height the snow,
Shed by the west-wind, feels the east-wind's breath,

And flows in water, and the hurrying streams
Are filled ; so did Penelope's fair cheeks 260
Seem to dissolve in tears, — tears shed for him
Who sat beside her even then. He saw
His weeping wife, and pitied her at heart ;
Yet were his eyes like iron or like horn,
And moved not in their lids ; for artfully 265
He kept his tears from falling. When the queen
Had ceased to weep, she answered him and said : —

“ Now, stranger, let me prove thee, if in truth
Thou didst receive, as thou hast just declared,
In thine abode, my husband and his train 270
Of noble friends. Describe the garb he wore ;
How looked he, and the friends he brought with him ? ”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered her :
“ O lady, hard it is to answer thee,
So long have I been far away from home. 275
'T is now the twentieth year since he was there
And left the isle, but, as my memory bids,
So will I speak. A fleecy purple cloak
Ulysses wore, a double web ; the clasp
Was golden, with two fastenings, and in front 280
It showed a work of rare design, — a hound
That held in his fore-paws a spotted fawn,

Struggling before his open mouth. Although
The figures were of gold, we all admired
The hound intent to break his victim's neck, 285
The fawn that, writhing, plied her nimble feet
To free herself. Around the hero's chest
And waist I saw a lustrous tunic worn,
Soft, like the thin film of the onion dried,
And bright as sunshine ; many ladies looked 290
With wonder on it. Yet consider this ;
I know not whether thus attired he left
His home, or whether, in the voyage thence,
Some comrade gave the garments, or perhaps
Some friendly host, for he was very dear 295
To many ; among the Greeks were few like him.
I gave him, from myself, a brazen sword,
And a fair purple cloak, a double web,
Besides a tunic reaching to his feet,
And with due honors sent him on his way 300
In his good ship. There came and went with him
A herald somewhat older than himself ;
Let me portray him, — hunchbacked, swarthy skinned,
And curly haired, Eurybates his name.
Ulysses honored him above the rest 305
Of his companions, for they thought alike."

He ceased ; the queen was moved to deeper grief,
For she remembered all the tokens well
Of which he spake ; and when that passionate gust
Of weeping ceased, she spake again and said : —

310

“Stranger, till now thy presence in these halls

Has only moved my pity ; thou henceforth

Art dear and honored. It was I who gave

The garments thou hast told me of ; these hands

Folded them in my chamber. I put on

315

The glittering clasp to be his ornament,

And now I never shall behold him more

Returning to his own dear land and home ;

So cruel was the fate that took him hence

To Ilium, in his roomy ship, a town

320

Of evil omen never to be named.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :

“O gracious consort of Laertes’ son !

Let not thy grief for him whom thou hast lost

Wither thy beauty longer, and consume

325

Thy heart. And yet I blame thee not at all ;

For any wife in losing him to whom

She gave herself while yet a maid, and bore

Children, will mourn him, though he be in worth

Below Ulysses, who, as fame declares,

330

Is like the gods. But cease to grieve, and hear
What I shall say, and I shall speak the truth,
Nor will I hide from thee that I have heard,
But lately from Ulysses, yet alive,
And journeying homeward, in the opulent realm 335
Of the Thesprotians, whence he brings with him
Much and rare treasure, gathered there among
The people. His beloved friends he lost,
And his good ship; the black deep swallowed them
In coming from Trinacria, for his crew 340
Had slaughtered there the oxen of the Sun.
The Sun and Jove were angry; therefore all
His comrades perished in the billowy sea;
But him upon his galley's keel the wind
Drove to the coast where the Phæacians dwell, 345
The kinsmen of the gods. They welcomed him,
And honored him as if he were a god,
And gave him many things, and would have sent
The hero safely to his native isle;
And here Ulysses would have been long since, 350
But that he deemed it wise to travel far,
And gather wealth,—for well Ulysses knew,
Beyond all other men, the arts of gain,
And none in these could think to rival him;

So Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians said, 355
Who also, in his palace, swore to me —
As to the gods of heaven he poured the wine —
That even then a galley was drawn down
Into the water, and already manned
With rowers, who should take Ulysses home. 360
But me he first dismissed, for at the time
A bark of the Thesprotians left the port,
Bound for Dulichium's cornfields. Ere I went
He showed the treasures of Ulysses stored
In the king's palace, — treasures that might serve 365
To feed the household of another chief
To the tenth generation. He who owned
That wealth was at Dodona, so the king
Declared, inquiring, at the lofty oak
Of Jupiter, the counsel of the god 370
How to return to his dear native land,
So long a wanderer, — whether openly
Or else by stealth. So he is safe, and soon
Will he be nearer to us ; for not long
Can he remain away from all his friends 375
And fatherland. To this I plight my oath ;
Let Jove, the greatest and the best of gods,
Be witness, and this hearth of the good prince

Ulysses, where I sit, that every word
Which I have said to thee will be fulfilled. 380
Within the year Ulysses will return,
As this month passes and the next comes in."

Then spake the sage Penelope again :
"Would that it might be thus, O stranger guest,
As thou hast said ; then shouldst thou have such thanks
And bounty at my hands that every one 386
Who meets thee should rejoice with thee. And yet
The thought abides with me, and so indeed
It must be, that Ulysses will no more
Return, nor wilt thou find an escort hence ; 390
For now no master like Ulysses rules —
And what a man was he ! — within these walls,
To welcome or dismiss the honored guest.
But now, ye maidens, let the stranger bathe,
And spread his couch with blankets, fleecy cloaks, 395
And showy tapestries, that he may lie
Warm till the Morning, in her golden car,
Draw near ; then with the early morn again
Bathe and anoint him, that he may sit down
Beside Telemachus prepared to take 400
His morning meal. Ill shall he fare who dares
Molest the stranger ; he shall have no place

Or office here, however he may rage.
And how, O stranger, wouldst thou learn that I
In mind and thoughtful wisdom am above 405
All other women, if I let thee sit
Squalid and meanly clad at banquets here?
Short is the life of man, and whoso bears
A cruel heart, devising cruel things,
On him men call down evil from the gods 410
While living, and pursue him, when he dies,
With scoffs. But whoso is of generous heart
And harbors generous aims, his guests proclaim
His praises far and wide to all mankind,
And numberless are they who call him good.” 415

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:
“O gracious consort of Laertes’ son!
Such cloaks and splendid coverings please me not,
Since in my long-oared bark I left behind
The snowy peaks of Crete. I still will lie, 420
As I am wont through many a sleepless night,
On a mean couch to wait the holy Morn
Upon her car of gold. I do not like
This washing of the feet. No maiden here
That ministers to thee may touch my foot; 425
But if among them be some aged dame

And faithful, who has suffered in her life
As I have suffered, she may touch my feet."

And thus the sage Penelope rejoined :

"Dear guest, — for never to these halls has come 430
A stranger so discreet or better liked
By me, so wisely thou dost speak, and well, —
I have an aged prudent dame, whose care
Reared my unfortunate husband. She received
The nursling when his mother brought him forth, 435
And she, though small her strength, will wash thy feet.
Rise, prudent Eurycleia, thou shalt wash
The feet of one whose years must be the same
As thy own master's ; such is doubtless now
Ulysses, with such wrinkled feet and hands. 440
For quickly doth misfortune make men old."

She spake ; the aged handmaid hid her face
With both her hands, and, shedding bitter tears,
Thus sorrowfully to the queen replied : —

"My heart is sad for thee, my son ; and yet 445
I can do nothing. Can it be that Jove
Hates thee beyond all other ? though thyself
So reverent to the gods ? No man on earth
Has burned so many thighs of fatling beasts
And chosen hecatombs as thou to Jove 450

The Thunderer, with prayer that thou mayst reach
A calm old age, and rear thy glorious son
To manhood ; yet the god hath cut thee off
From thy return forever. Even now
Perchance the women of some princely house 455
Which he has entered in some distant land
Scoff at him as these wretched creatures scoff
At thee, O stranger, who, to shun their taunts
And insults, wilt not suffer them to wash
Thy feet. The sage Penelope commands, 460
And I am not unwilling. I will wash
Thy feet, both for her sake and for thy own ;
For deeply am I moved at sight of thee.
Hear what I say : of strangers in distress
Come many hither, yet have I beheld 465
No one who bears, in shape and voice and feet,
Such likeness to our absent lord as thou."

Ulysses, the sagacious, thus replied :
" O aged woman, so has it been said
By all who have beheld both him and me. 470
They all declare that we are very like
Each other ; thou in this hast spoken well."

He spake ; she took a shining vase designed
For washing feet, and poured cold water in

In large abundance, and warm water next. 475
Ulysses, who had sat before the hearth,
Moved to a darker spot, for in his mind
The thought arose that she might find a scar
Upon his limbs in handling them, and thus
His secret would be known. She came and bathed 480
His feet, and found the scar. 'T was where a boar
With his white tooth had gashed the limb, as once
He journeyed to Parnassus, where he paid
A visit to Autolycus and his sons,
His mother's noble father, who excelled 485
All men in craft and oaths, such was the gift
Conferred on him by Hermes; for to him
Autolycus made grateful offerings,
The thighs of lambs and kids, and evermore
The god was with him. Once Autolycus 490
Came to the opulent realm of Ithaca,
And found his daughter with a son new born;
There Eurycleia placed upon his knees
The infant, just as he had supped, and said: —
“Give this dear babe, Autolycus, a name, — 495
Thy daughter's son, vouchsafed to many prayers.”
And thus Autolycus in answer spake:
“Daughter and son-in-law, be his the name

That I shall give. In coming to this isle
I bear the hate of many — both of men 500
And women — scattered o'er the nourishing earth;
Name him Ulysses therefore, and when, grown
To man's estate, he visits the proud halls
Reared at Parnassus, where his mother dwelt
And my possessions lie, I will bestow 505
A share on him, and send him home rejoiced."

And therefore went Ulysses to receive
The promised princely gifts. Autolycus
And all his sons received him with kind words,
And friendly grasp of hands. Amphithea there — 510
His mother's mother — took him in her arms,
And kissed his brow and both his beautiful eyes.
Then to his noble sons Autolycus
Called to prepare a feast, and they obeyed.
They brought and slew a steer of five years old, 515
And flayed and dressed it, hewed the joints apart,
And sliced the flesh, and fixed it upon spits,
Roasted it carefully, and gave to each
His part. So all the day till set of sun
They feasted, to the full content of all. 520
And when the sun had set, and earth grew dark,
They laid them down, and took the gift of sleep.

But when the rosy-fingered Morn appeared,
Born of the Dawn, forth issued the young men,
The children of Autolycus, with hounds, 525
To hunt, attended by their noble guest,
Ulysses. Up the steep of that high mount
Parnassus, clothed with woods, they climbed, and soon
Were on its airy heights. The sun, new risen
From the deep ocean's gently flowing stream, 530
Now smote the fields. The hunters reached a dell;
The hounds before them tracked the game; behind
Followed the children of Autolycus.
The generous youth Ulysses, brandishing
A spear of mighty length, came pressing on 535
Close to the hounds. There lay a huge wild boar
Within a thicket, where moist-blowing winds
Came not, nor in his brightness could the sun
Pierce with his beams the covert, nor the rain
Pelt through, so closely grew the shrubs. The ground 540
Was heaped with sheddings of the withered leaves.
Around him came the noise of dogs and men
Approaching swiftly. From his lair he sprang
And faced them, with the bristles on his neck
Upright, and flashing eyes. Ulysses rushed 545
Before the others, with the ponderous spear

Raised high in his strong hand intent to smite.
The boar was first to strike ; he dealt a blow
Sidelong, and gashed his foe above the knee,
And tore the flesh, but left untouched the bone. 550
Ulysses, striking with his burnished spear
The boar's right shoulder, drove the weapon through.
He fell with piercing cries amid the dust,
And the life left him. Then around their guest
The kindly children of Autolycus 555
Came and bound up with care the wound, and stanchèd
With spells the dark blood of the blameless youth.
And hastened with him to their father's home.
And when Autolycus and they his sons
Had seen him wholly healed, they loaded him 560
With presents, and, rejoicing for his sake,
Sent him rejoicing back to Ithaca.
His father and his gracious mother there
Rejoiced in turn, and asked him of the scar,
And how it came, and he related all, — 565
How by the white tusk of a savage boar
The wound was given on the Parnassian heights,
As he was hunting with her father's sons."

The aged woman, as she took the foot
Into her hands, perceived by touch the scar, 570

And, letting fall the limb, it struck the vase.
Loud rang the brass, the vase was overturned,
And poured the water forth. At once a rush
Of gladness and of grief came o'er her heart.
Tears filled her eyes, and her clear voice was choked. 575
She touched Ulysses on the chin, and said : —

“ Dear child ! thou art Ulysses, of a truth.
I knew thee not till I had touched the scar.”

So speaking, toward Penelope she turned
Her eyes, about to tell her that her lord 580
Was in the palace ; but the queen saw not,
And all that passed was unperceived by her,
For Pallas turned her thoughts another way.
Meantime, Ulysses on the nurse's throat
Laid his right hand, and with the other drew 585
The aged woman nearer him, and said : —

“ Nurse, wouldst thou ruin me, who drew long since
Milk from thy bosom, and who now return,
After much suffering borne for twenty years,
To mine own land ? Now then, since thou hast learned
The truth, — by prompting of some god, no doubt, — 591
Keep silence, lest some others in the house
Should learn it also. Else, — I tell thee this,
And will perform my word, — if God permit

That I o'ercome the arrogant suitor-crew, 595
Nurse as thou art, I spare not even thee,
When in these halls the other maidens die."

Then thus the prudent Eurycleia said :
"What words, my son, have passed thy lips? for well
Thou knowest my firm mind; it never yields. 600
Like solid rock or steel I keep my trust.
This let me tell thee, and, I pray thee, keep
My words in mind. If, by the aid of God,
Thou overcome the arrogant suitor-crew,
Then will I name the handmaids that disgrace 605
Thy household, and point out the innocent."

Ulysses, the sagacious, thus rejoined :
"Why name them, nurse? It needs not. I myself
Shall watch them, and shall know them all. Hold thou
Thy peace, and leave the issue with the gods." 610

He spake; the aged woman left the place
To bring a second bath, for on the floor
The first was spilled. When she had bathed his feet
And made them smooth with oil, Ulysses drew
Close to the hearth his seat again, to take 615
The warmth, and with his tatters hid the scar.
And thus the sage Penelope began : —

"Stranger, but little longer will I yet

Inquire ; the hour of grateful rest is near
For those who, though unhappy, can receive 620
The balm of slumber. Yet for me some god
Appoints immeasurable grief. All day
In sorrow and in sighs, my solace is
To oversee my maidens at their tasks
Here in the palace ; but when evening comes, 625
And all betake themselves to rest, I lie
Upon my couch, and sorrows thick and sharp
Awake new misery in my heart. As when,
In the fresh spring, the swarthy Nightingale,
Daughter of Pandarus, among thick leaves 630
Sings sweetly to the woods, and, changing oft
The strain, pours forth her voice of many notes,
Lamenting the beloved Itylus,
Her son by royal Zethos, whom she smote
Unwittingly, and slew ; with such quick change 635
My mind is tossed from thought to thought. I muse
Whether to keep my place beside my son,
And hold what here is mine, my dower, my maids
And high-roofed halls, as one who still reveres
Her husband's bed, and heeds the public voice, 640
Or follow one of the Achaian chiefs,
The noblest of the wooers, and the one

Who offers marriage presents without stint.
My son's green years, while he was yet a boy,
Unripe in mind, allowed me not to wed, 645
And leave his father's home; but he is grown,
And on the verge of manhood. He desires
That I should leave the palace, for his wrath
Is great against the men who waste his wealth.
Hear, and interpret now a dream of mine : 650
Within these courts are twenty geese that eat
Corn from the water, and I look on them
Pleased and amused. From off a mountain came
A hook-beaked eagle, broke their necks, and left
Their bodies strewn about the palace dead, 655
And soared again into the air of heaven.
I wept and moaned, although it was a dream;
And round me came the fair-haired Grecian maids,
Lamenting wildly that the bird of prey
Had slain my geese. Then came the eagle back, 660
And took his perch upon the jutting roof,
And thus bespake me in a human voice : —
“ ‘ O daughter of Icarius, the renowned !
Let not thy heart be troubled ; this is not
A dream, but a true vision, and will be 665
Fulfilled. The geese denote the suitor-train,

And I, who was an eagle once, am come,
Thy husband, now to end them utterly.'

"He spake ; my slumbers left me, and I looked,
And saw the geese that in the palace still
Were at their trough, and feeding as before."

670

And thus Ulysses, the sagacious, said :

"Lady, the dream that visited thy sleep
Cannot be wrested to another sense.

Ulysses has himself revealed to thee
The way of its fulfilment. Death is near
The suitors, and not one escapes his doom."

675

Then spake the sage Penelope again :

"Of dreams, O stranger, some are meaningless
And idle, and can never be fulfilled.

680

Two portals are there for their shadowy shapes,
Of ivory one, and one of horn. The dreams

That come through the carved ivory deceive

With promises that never are made good ;

But those which pass the doors of polished horn,

685

And are beheld of men, are ever true.

And yet I cannot hope that my strange dream

Came through them, though my son and I would both

Rejoice if it were so. This let me say,

And heed me well. To-morrow brings to us

690

The hateful morn which takes me from my home,
The palace of Ulysses. I shall now
Propose a contest. In the palace court
Ulysses in a row set up twelve stakes,
Like props that hold a galley up; each stake 695
Had its own ring; he stood afar, and sent
An arrow through them all. I shall propose
This contest to the suitors. He who bends
The bow with easy mastery, and sends
Through the twelve rings an arrow, I will take 700
To follow from the palace where I passed
My youthful married life, — a beautiful home,
And stored with wealth; a home which I shall long
Remember, even in my nightly dreams.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus: 705
“O gracious consort of Laertes’ son!
Let not this contest be delayed; the man
Of ready wiles, Ulysses, will be here
Ere, tampering with the hero’s polished bow,
The suitors shall prevail to stretch the cord, 710
And send an arrow through the rings of steel.”

And thus the sage Penelope rejoined: —
“Stranger, if, sitting in the palace here,
Thou still wouldst entertain me as thou dost,

Sleep would not fall upon my lids ; and yet 715
Sleepless the race of mortals cannot be,
So have the gods ordained, who measure out
His lot to man upon the nourishing earth.
I to the upper rooms withdraw, to take
My place upon the couch which has become 720
To me a place of sorrow and of tears
Since my Ulysses went away to Troy,
That fatal town which should be named no more.
And I will lay me down ; but thou remain
Within these walls, and make the floor thy bed, 725
Or let these maidens spread a couch for thee."

Penelope, thus having spoken, went
Up to her royal bower, but not alone ;
Her maids went with her. When they were within
She wept for her dear husband, till at length 730
The blue-eyed Pallas graciously distilled
Upon her closing lids the balm of sleep.

B O O K X X .

THE noble chief, Ulysses, in the porch
Lay down to rest. An undressed bullock's hide
Was under him, and over that the skins
Of sheep, which for the daily sacrifice
The Achaians slew. Eurynomè had spread 5
A cloak above him. There he lay awake,
And meditated how he yet should smite
The suitors down. Meantime, with cries of mirth
And laughter, came the women forth to seek
The suitors' arms. Ulysses, inly moved 10
With anger, pondered whether he should rise
And put them all to death, or give their shame
A respite for another night, the last.
His heart raged in his bosom. As a hound
Growls, walking round her whelps, when she beholds 15
A stranger, and is eager for the attack,
So growled his heart within him, and so fierce
Was his impatience with that shameless crew.

He smote his breast, and thus he chid his heart : —

“Endure it, heart ! thou didst bear worse than this. 20
When the grim Cyclops of resistless strength
Devoured thy brave companions, thou couldst still
Endure, till thou by stratagem didst leave
The cave in which it seemed that thou must die.”

Thus he rebuked his heart, and, growing calm, 25
His heart submitted ; but the hero tossed
From side to side. As when one turns and turns
The stomach of a bullock filled with fat
And blood before a fiercely blazing fire
And wishes it were done, so did the chief 30
Shift oft from side to side, while pondering how
To lay a strong hand on the multitude
Of shameless suitors, — he but one, and they
So many. Meantime Pallas, sliding down
From heaven, in form a woman, came, and there 35
Beside his bed stood over him, and spake : —

“Why, most unhappy of the sons of men,
Art thou still sleepless ? This is thine abode,
And here thou hast thy consort and a son
Whom any man might covet for his own.” 40

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :
“Truly, O goddess, all that thou hast said

Is rightly spoken. This perplexes me, —
How to lay hands upon these shameless men,
When I am only one, and they a throng 45
That fill the palace. Yet another thought,
And mightier still, — if, by thy aid and Jove's,
I slay the suitors, how shall I myself
Be safe thereafter? Think, I pray, of this."

And thus in turn the blue-eyed Pallas said : 50
"O faint of spirit! in an humbler friend
Than I am, in a friend of mortal birth
And less far-seeing, one might put his trust;
But I am born a goddess, and protect
Thy life in every danger. Let me say, 55
And plainly say, if fifty armed bands
Of men should gather round us, eager all
To take thy life, thou mightest drive away,
Unharm'd by them, their herds and pamper'd flocks.
But give thyself to sleep. To wake and watch 60
All night is most unwholesome. Thou shalt find
A happy issue from thy troubles yet."

She spake, and, shedding slumber on his lids,
Upward the glorious goddess took her way
Back to Olympus, when she saw that sleep 65
Had seized him, making him forget all care

And slackening every limb. His faithful wife
Was still awake, and sat upright and wept
On her soft couch, and after many tears
The glorious lady prayed to Dian thus : —

70

“Goddess august! Diana, child of Jove!
I would that thou wouldst send into my heart
A shaft to take my life, or that a storm
Would seize and hurl me through the paths of air,
And cast me into ocean’s restless streams,
As once a storm, descending, swept away
The daughters born to Pandarus. The gods
Had slain their parents, and they dwelt alone
As orphans in their palace, nourished there
By blessed Venus with the curds of milk,
And honey, and sweet wine, while Juno gave
Beauty and wit beyond all womankind,
And chaste Diana dignity of form,
And Pallas every art that graces life.
Then, as the blessed Venus went to ask
For them, of Jove the Thunderer, on the heights
Of his Olympian mount, the crowning gift
Of happy marriage, — for to Jove is known
Whatever comes to pass, and what shall be
The fortune, good or ill, of mortal men, —

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90

The Harpies came meantime, bore off the maids,
And gave them to the hateful sisterhood
Of Furies as their servants. So may those
Who dwell upon Olympus make an end
Of me, or fair-haired Dian strike me down, 95
That, with the image of Ulysses still
Before my mind, I may not seek to please
One of less worth. This evil might be borne
By one who weeps all day, and feels at heart
A settled sorrow, yet can sleep at night. 100
For sleep, when once it weighs the eyelids down,
Makes men unmindful both of good and ill,
And all things else. But me some deity
Visits with fearful dreams. There lay by me,
This very night, one like him, as he was 105
When with his armed men he sailed for Troy ;
And I was glad, for certainly I deemed
It was a real presence, and no dream."

She spake. Just then, upon her car of gold,
Appeared the Morn. The great Ulysses heard 110
That voice of lamentation ; anxiously
He mused ; it seemed to him as if the queen
Stood over him and knew him. Gathering up
In haste the cloak and skins on which he slept,

He laid them in the palace on a seat, 115
But bore the bull's hide forth in open air,
And lifted up his hands and prayed to Jove : —

“ O Father Jove, and all the gods ! if ye
Have led me graciously, o'er land and deep,
Across the earth, and, after suffering much, 120
To mine own isle, let one of those who watch
Within the palace speak some ominous word,
And grant a sign from thee without these walls.”

So prayed he. All-providing Jupiter
Hearkened, and thundered from the clouds around 125
The bright Olympian peaks. Ulysses heard
With gladness. From a room within the house,
In which the mills of the king's household stood,
A woman, laboring at the quern, gave forth
An omen also. There were twelve who toiled 130
In making flour of barley and of wheat, —
The strength of man. The rest were all asleep ;
Their tasks were done ; one only, of less strength
Than any other there, kept toiling on.

She paused a moment, stopped the whirling stone, 135
And spake these words, — a portent for the king : —

“ O Father Jove, the king of gods and men !
Thou hast just thundered from the starry heaven,

And yet there is no cloud. To some one here
It is a portent. O perform for me, 140
All helpless as I am, this one request !
Let now the suitors in this palace take
Their last and final pleasant feast to-day, —
These men who make my limbs, with constant toil,
In grinding corn for them, to lose their strength, 145
Once let them banquet here, and then no more.”

She spake ; the omen of the woman's words
And Jove's loud thunder pleased Ulysses well ;
And now he deemed he should avenge himself
Upon the guilty ones. The other maids 150
Of that fair palace of Ulysses woke
And came together, and upon the hearth
Kindled a steady fire. Telemachus
Rose from his bed in presence like a god,
Put on his garments, hung his trenchant sword 155
Upon his shoulder, tied to his fair feet
The shapely sandals, took his massive spear
Tipped with sharp brass, and, stopping as he reached
The threshold, spake to Eurycleia thus : —

“ Dear nurse, have ye with honor fed and lodged 160
Our guest, or have ye suffered him to find
A lodging where he might, without your care ?

Discerning as she is, my mother pays
High honor to the worse among her guests,
And sends the nobler man unhonored hence." 165

And thus the prudent Eurycleia said :
" My child, blame not thy mother ; she deserves
No blame. The stranger sat and drank his wine,
All that he would, and said, when pressed to eat,
That he desired no more. And when he thought 170
Of sleep, she bade her maidens spread his couch ;
But he refused a bed and rugs, like one
Inured to misery, and beneath the porch
Slept on an undressed bull's hide and the skins
Of sheep, and over him we cast a cloak." 175

She spake ; Telemachus, his spear in hand,
Went forth, his fleet dogs following him. He sought
The council where the well-greaved Greeks were met.
Meantime the noble Eurycleia, child
Of Ops, Pisenor's son, bespake the maids : — 180

" Come, some of you, at once, and sweep the floor,
And sprinkle it, and on the shapely thrones
Spread coverings of purple tapestry ;
Let others wipe the tables with a sponge,
And cleanse the beakers and the double cups, 185
While others go for water to the fount,

And bring it quickly, for not long to-day
 The suitors will be absent from these halls.
 They will come early to the general feast."

She spake; the handmaids hearkened and obeyed, 190
 And twenty went to the dark well to draw
 The water, while the others busily
 Bestirred themselves about the house. Then came
 The servants of the chiefs, and set themselves
 Neatly to cleave the wood. Then also came 195
 The women from the well. The swineherd last
 Came with three swine, the fattest of the herd.
 In that fair court he let them feed, and sought
 Ulysses, greeting him with courteous words: —

"Hast thou, O stranger, found among these Greeks 200
 More reverence? Art thou still their mark of scorn?"

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:
 "O that the gods, Eumæus, would avenge
 The insolence of those who meditate
 Violent deeds, and make another's house 205
 Their plotting-place, and feel no touch of shame!"

So talked they with each other. Now appeared
 Melanthius, keeper of the goats. He brought
 Goats for the suitors' banquet; they were choice
 Beyond all others. With him also came 210

Two goatherds. In the echoing portico
He bound his goats. He saw Ulysses there,
And thus accosted him with railing words : —

“Stranger, art thou still here, the palace pest,
And begging still, and wilt thou ne’er depart? 215
We shall not end this quarrel, I perceive,
Till thou hast tried the flavor of my fist.
It is not decent to be begging here
Continually; the Greeks have other feasts.”

He spake; Ulysses answered not, but shook 220
His head in silence, planning fearful things.

Philætiüs now, a master-herdsman, came,
And for the banquet of the suitors led
A heifer that had never yeaned, and goats
The fatlings of the flock; they came across 225
The ferry, brought by those whose office is
To bear whoever comes from shore to shore.
He bound his animals in the sounding porch,
And went and, standing by the swineherd, said : —

“Who, swineherd, is the stranger newly come 230
To this our palace? of what parents born,
And of what race, and where his native land?
Unhappy seemingly, yet like a king
In person. Sorrowful must be the lot

Of men who wander to and fro on earth, 235
When even to kings the gods appoint distress."

He spake, and, greeting with his offered hand
Ulysses, said in winged words aloud: —

"Stranger and father, hail! and mayst thou yet
Be happy in the years to come at least, 240
Though held in thrall by many sorrows now.
Yet thou, All-father Jove! art most austere
Of all the gods, not sparing even those
Who have their birth from thee, but bringing them
To grief and pain. The sweat is on my brow 245
When I behold this stranger, and my eyes
Are filled with tears when to my mind comes back
The image of Ulysses, who must now,
I think, be wandering, clothed in rags like thee,
Among the abodes of men, if yet indeed 250
He lives and sees the sweet light of the sun.
But if that he be dead, and in the abode
Of Pluto, woe is me for his dear sake!
The blameless chief, who when I was a boy
Gave to me, in the Cephallenian fields, 255
The charge of all his beeves; and they are now
Innumerable; the broad-fronted race
Of cattle never would have multiplied

So largely under other care than mine.

Now other masters bid me bring my beeves 260

For their own feasts. They little heed his son,

The palace-heir ; as little do they dread

The vengeance of the gods ; they long to share

Among them the possessions of the king,

So many years unheard from. But this thought 265

Comes to my mind again, and yet again :

Wrong were it, while the son is yet alive,

To drive the cattle to a foreign land,

Where alien men inhabit ; yet 't is worse

To stay and tend another's beeves, and bear 270

This spoil. And long ago would I have fled

To some large-minded monarch, since this waste

Is not to be endured, but that I think

Still of my suffering lord, and hope that yet

He may return and drive the suitors hence." 275

Ulysses, the sagacious, answering, said :

"Herdsman, since thou dost seem not ill inclined,

Nor yet unwise, and I perceive in thee

A well-discerning mind, I therefore say,

And pledge my solemn oath, — Jove, first of gods, 280

Be witness, and this hospitable board

And hearth of good Ulysses, which has here

Received me, — while thou art within these halls
Ulysses will assuredly return,
And, if thou choose to look, thine eyes shall see 285
The suitors slain, who play the master here.”

And thus the master of the herds rejoined :
“Stranger, may Jupiter make good thy words!
Then shalt thou see what strength is in my arm.”

Eumæus also prayed to all the gods, 290
That now the wise Ulysses might return.
So talked they with each other, while apart
The suitors doomed Telemachus to death,
And plotted how to take his life. Just then
A bird — an eagle — on the left flew by, 295
High up ; his talons held a timid dove.
And then Amphinomus bespake the rest : —

“O friends, this plan to slay Telemachus
Must fail. And now repair we to the feast.”

So spake Amphinomus, and to his words 300
They all gave heed, and hastened to the halls
Of the divine Ulysses, where they laid
Their cloaks upon the benches and the thrones,
And slaughtering the choice sheep, and fatling goats,
And porkers, and a heifer from the herd, 305
Roasted the entrails, and distributed

A share to each. Next mingled they the wine
In the large bowls. The swineherd brought a cup
To every one. Philæti^{us}, chief among
The servants, gave from shapely canisters 310
The bread to each. Melanthius poured the wine.
Then putting forth their hands, they all partook
The ready banquet. With a wise design,
Telemachus near the stone threshold placed
Ulysses, on a shabby seat, beside 315
A little table, but within the walls
Of that strong-pillared pile. He gave him there
Part of the entrails, and poured out for him
The wine into a cup of gold, and said : —

“Sit here, and drink thy wine among the rest, 320
And from the insults and assaults of these
It shall be mine to guard thee. For this house
Is not the common property of all ;
Ulysses first acquired it, and for me. —
And you, ye suitors, keep your tongues from taunts 325
And hands from force, lest there be wrath and strife.”

He spake ; the suitors, as they heard him, bit
Their pressed lips, wondering at Telemachus,
Who uttered such bold words. Antinoüs then,
Eupeithes' son, bespoke his fellows thus : — 330

“Harsh as they are, let us, O Greeks, endure
These speeches of Telemachus. He makes
High threats, but had Saturnian Jove allowed,
We should, ere this, and in these very halls,
Have quieted our loud-tongued orator.”

335

So spake the suitor, but Telemachus
Heeded him not. Then through the city came
The heralds with a hallowed hecatomb,
Due to the gods. The long-haired people thronged
The shady grove of Phœbus, archer-god.

340

Now when the flesh was roasted and was drawn
From off the spits, and each was given his share,
They held high festival. The men who served
The banquet gave Ulysses, where he sat,
A portion equal to their own, for so
His own dear son Telemachus enjoined.

345

Yet did not Pallas cause the haughty crew
Of suitors to refrain from stinging taunts,
That so the spirit of Laertes' son
Might be more deeply wounded. One there was
Among the suitors, a low-thoughted wretch ;
Ctesippus was his name, and his abode
Was Samos. Trusting in his father's wealth,
He wooed the wife of the long-absent king

350

Ulysses. To his insolent mates he said : —

355

“Hear me, ye noble suitors, while I speak.

This stranger has received an equal share,

As is becoming; for it were not just

Nor seemly to pass by, in such a feast,

The guests, whoe’er they may be, that resort

360

To this fair mansion of Telemachus.

I also will bestow on him a gift

Of hospitality, and he in turn

May give it to the keeper of the bath,

Or any other of the menial train

365

That serve the household of Ulysses here.”

So speaking, with his strong right hand he flung

A bullock’s foot, which from a canister

Hard by he plucked. Ulysses gently bowed

His head, and shunned the blow, and grimly smiled.

370

The missile struck the solid wall, and then

Telemachus rebuked the suitor thus : —

“Ctesippus, well hast thou escaped with life,

Not having hit the stranger, who himself

Shrank from the blow; else had I pinned thee through

With my sharp spear. Instead of wedding feast,

376

Thy father would have celebrated here

Thy funeral rites. Let no man in these halls

Bear himself insolently in my sight
Hereafter, for my reason now is ripe 380
To know the right from wrong. I was of late
A child, and now it is enough to bear
That ye should slay our sheep, and drink our wine,
And eat our bread,—for what can one man do
Against so many? Cease this petty war 385
Of wrong and hatred; but if ye desire
To take my life, 't is well; 't were better so.
And rather would I die by violence
Than live to see these most unmanly deeds, —
Guests driven away, and woman-servants hauled 390
Through these fair rooms by brutal wassailers."

He ended, and the assembly all sat mute
Till Agelaüs spake, Damastor's son : —

"O friends! let no man here with carping words
Gainsay what is so rightly said, nor yet 395
Insult the stranger more, nor one of those
Who serve the household of the godlike chief
Ulysses in his palace. I would say
This word in kindness to Telemachus
And to his mother; may it please them both! 400
While yet the hope was cherished in your hearts
That wise Ulysses would return, no blame

Could fasten on the queen that she remained
Unwedded, and resisted those who came
To woo her in the palace. Better so, 405
Had he come home again. Yet now, 't is clear,
He comes no more. Go then, Telemachus,
And, sitting by thy mother, bid her wed
The noblest of her wooers, and the one
Who brings the richest gifts; and thou possess 410
Thy father's wealth in peace, and eat and drink
At will, while she shall find another home."

And thus discreet Telemachus replied :
"Nay, Agelaüs, for I swear by Jove,
And by my father's sufferings, who has died, 415
Or yet is wandering, far from Ithaca,
That I do nothing to delay the choice
And marriage of my mother. I consent
That she become the wife of whom she list,
And him who offers most. But I should feel 420
Great shame to thrust her forth against her will,
And with unfilial speeches ; God forbid !" .

He ended here, and Pallas, as he spake,
To inextinguishable laughter moved
The suitors. There they sat with wandering minds ; 425
They swallowed morsels foul with blood ; their eyes

Were filled with tears ; their hearts foreboded woe.

Then spake the godlike Theoclymenus : —

“ Unhappy men ! what may this evil be
That overtakes you ? Every brow and face 430
And each one’s lower limbs are wrapped in night,
And moans arise, and tears are on your cheeks.
The walls and all the graceful cornices
Between the pillars are bedropped with blood,
The portico is full, these halls are full 435
Of shadows, hastening down to Erebus
Amid the gloom. The sun is blotted out
From heaven, and fearful darkness covers all.”

He spake, and loud they laughed. Eurymachus,
The son of Polybus, in answer said : — 440

“ The stranger prattles idly ; he is come
From some far land. Conduct him through the door,
Young men, and send him to the market-place,
Since all things here are darkened to his eyes.”

Then spake the godlike Theoclymenus : 445
“ Eurymachus, from thee I ask no guide,
For I have eyes and ears, and two good feet,
And in my breast a mind as sound as they,
And by the aid of these I mean to make
My way without ; for clearly I perceive 450

A coming evil, which no suitor here
Will yet escape, — no one who, in these halls
Of the great chief, Ulysses, treats with scorn
His fellow-man, and broods o'er guilty plans."

He spake, and, hastening from that noble pile, 455
Came to Piræus, in whose house he found
A welcome. All the suitors, as he went,
Looked at each other, and, the more to vex
Telemachus, kept laughing at his guests.
And thus an insolent youth among them said : — 460

"No man had ever a worse set of guests
Than thou, Telemachus. For what a wretch
That wandering beggar is, who always wants
His bread and wine, and is unfit for work,
And has no strength ; in truth, a useless load 465
Upon the earth he treads. The other guest
Rises to play the prophet. If thou take
My counsel, which I give thee for thy good,
Let them at once be put on board a bark
Of many oars, and we will send them hence 470
To the Sicilians ; they will bring a price."

So talked the suitors, but he heeded not
Their words, and, looking toward his father, held
His peace, expecting when he would lay hands

Upon that insolent crew. Penelope, 475
Sage daughter of Icarius, took her place
Right opposite upon a sumptuous seat,
And heard the words of every man who spake
Within the hall. They held that midday feast
With laughter;—a luxurious feast it was, 480
And mirthful; many victims had been slain
To furnish forth the tables; but no feast
Could be more bitter than the later one,
To which the goddess and that valiant man
Would bid the guilty crew of plotters soon. 485

B O O K X X I .

PALLAS, the goddess of the azure eyes,
Woke in the mind of sage Penelope,
The daughter of Icarius, this design, —
To put into the suitors' hands the bow
And gray steel rings, and to propose a game 5
That in the palace was to usher in
The slaughter. So she climbed the lofty stair,
Up from the hall, and took in her plump hand
The fair carved key; its wards were wrought of brass,
And ivory was the handle. Soon she reached 10
The furthest room with her attendant maids.
There lay the treasures of Ulysses, — brass
And gold, and steel divinely wrought. There lay
His bow unstrung; there lay his quiver charged
With arrows; many were the deadly shafts 15
It held, a stranger's gift, who met him once
In Lacedæmon, Iphitus by name,
The son of Eurytus, and like the gods

In presence. In Messenè met the twain,
And in the mansion of Orsilochus, 20
The warlike. Thither had Ulysses come
To claim a debt from all the region round ;
For rovers from Messenè to their ships
Had driven and carried off from Ithaca
Three hundred sheep and those who tended them. 25
For this Ulysses, though a stripling yet,
Came that long voyage, on an embassy,
Sent by his father and the other chiefs.
And Iphitus had come in search of steeds
Which he had lost, — twelve mares, and under them 30
Twelve hardy mules, their foals. That errand brought
The doom of death upon him. For he came,
In journeying, to the abode of Hercules,
The mighty hero-son of Jupiter,
Famed for his labors, who, in his own house, 35
Slew Iphitus, the stranger. Cruel wretch !
Who revered not the vengeance of the gods,
Nor what was due to his own board, at which
He placed his guest, and slew him afterward,
And in his stables kept the goodly mares. 40
'T was when this guest was seeking for his steeds
He met Ulysses, and bestowed on him

The bow, which mighty Eurytus once bore,
And dying in his lofty palace left
The weapon to his son. Ulysses gave 45
In turn a trenchant sword and massive lance,
A pledge of kindly hospitality,
Begun, but not continued till they sat
Each at the other's table; for the son
Of Jove first took the life of him who gave 50
The bow, the godlike son of Eurytus.
That bow Ulysses, when he went to war
In his black galleys, never took with him,
But left it in his palace, to be kept
In memory of a beloved friend, 55
And only bore it in his own domain.

Now when the glorious lady reached the room,
And stood upon the threshold, wrought of oak
And polished by the workman's cunning hand,
Who stretched the line upon it, and set up 60
Its posts, and hung its shining doors, she loosed
With a quick touch the thong that held the ring,
Put in the key, and with a careful aim
Struck back the sounding bolts. As when a bull
Roars in the field, such sound the beautiful doors, 65
Struck with the key, gave forth, and instantly

They opened to her. Up the lofty floor
She stepped, where stood the coffer that contained
The perfumed garments. Reaching forth her hand,
The queen took down the bow, that hung within 70
Its shining case, and sat her down, and laid
The case upon her knees, and, drawing forth
The monarch's bow, she wept aloud. As soon
As that new gush of tears had ceased to fall,
Back to the hall she went, and that proud throng 75
Of suitors, bearing in her hand the bow
Unstrung, and quiver, where the arrows lay
Many and deadly. Her attendant maids
Brought also down a coffer, where were laid
Much brass and steel, provided by the king 80
For games like these. The glorious lady then,
In presence of the suitors, stood beside
The columns that upheld the stately roof.
She held a lustrous veil before her cheeks,
And, while on either side of her a maid 85
Stood modestly, bespoke the suitors thus : —

“Hear, noble suitors! ye who throng these halls,
And eat and drink from day to day, while long
My husband has been gone; your sole excuse
For all this lawlessness the claim ye make 90

That I become a bride. Come then, for now
A contest is proposed. I bring to you
The mighty bow that great Ulysses bore.
Whoe'er among you he may be whose hand
Shall bend this bow, and send through these twelve rings
An arrow, him I follow hence, and leave 96
This beautiful abode of my young years,
With all its plenty, — though its memory,
I think, will haunt me even in my dreams."

She spake, and bade the master of the swine, 100
The good Eumæus, place the bow and rings
Of hoary steel before the suitor-train.
In tears he bore the bow and laid it down.
The herdsman also wept to see again
His master's bow. Antinoüs called to both 105
With a loud voice, and chid them angrily: —

"Ye silly rustics, who can never see
Beyond the hour, why trouble with your tears
The lady who had grief enough besides
For her lost husband? Sit and share the feast 110
In silence, or go forth and leave the bow;
A difficult contest it will be for us,
Nor, as I think, will this fair bow be bent
With ease, since surely there is no man here

Such as Ulysses was. I saw him once, 115
While but a child, and still remember him."

He spake, yet in his secret heart believed
That he should bend the bow, and send a shaft
Through all the rings. And yet he was the first
To taste the steel, — an arrow from the hand 120
Of the great chief Ulysses, — whom he wronged
In his own palace, and to equal wrong
Encouraged others. Then Telemachus
Rose in his sacred might, and thus began : —

"Alas! it must be that Saturnian Jove 125
Has made me lose my wits. Wise as she is,
My mother promises to leave her home
And follow some one else, and yet I laugh,
And am delighted in my foolish heart.
Come then, since such a contest is proposed, 130
Ye suitors! and for such a woman too.
The like is not in all the lands of Greece,
Argos, Mycenæ, or the hallowed shore
Of Pylos, or in Ithaca itself,
Or the dark mainland coast. Ye know it well; 135
Why should I praise my mother? Come then, all;
Let there be no excuses for delay,
Nor longer leave the bow untried, that we

May see the event. I too am moved to try ;
And if I bend the bow, and send a shaft 140
Through all the rings, my gracious mother then
Will not, to my great grief, renounce her home,
And, following another, leave me here,
Although my prowess even now might win
The glorious prizes that my father won.” 145

He spake and, rising, from his shoulders took
The purple cloak, and laid the trenchant sword
Aside ; and first he placed the rings of steel
In order, opening for them in the ground
A long trench by a line, and stamping close 150
The earth around them. All admired the skill
With which he ranged them, never having seen
The game before. And then he took his place
Upon the threshold, and essayed the bow ;
And thrice he made the attempt, and thrice gave o'er, 155
Yet hoping still to draw the cord, and send
An arrow through the rings. He would have drawn
The bow at the fourth trial, but a nod
Given by his father caused him to forbear,
Though eager for the attempt. And then again 160
The princely youth bespake the suitors thus : —
“ Well, this is strange ! I may hereafter prove

A craven and a weakling, or perchance
Am yet too young, and cannot trust my arm
To do me right against the man who first 165
Assaults me. Come then, ye whose strength excels
My own, and try the bow, and end the strife."

He spake, and setting down the bow to lean
Against the firm smooth panels of the wall,
And the swift shaft against the bow's fair curve, 170
He took again his seat upon the throne
From which he rose. And then Eupheithes' son,
Antinoös, to the crowd of suitors said: —

"Rise one by one, my friends, from right to left.
Begin where he begins who pours the wine." 175

So spake Antinoös, and the rest approved.
Then rose Leiodes, son of CEnops, first.
He was their seer, and always had his seat
Beside the ample bowl. From deeds of wrong
He shrank with hatred, and was sore incensed 180
Against the suitors all. He took the bow
And shaft, and, going to the threshold, stood
And tried the bow, yet bent it not; it galled
His hands, for they were soft, and all unused
To such a task; and thus at length he spake: — 185

"O friends, I bend it not; another hand

Must try. This bow, upon this very spot,
Will take from many a prince the breath of life.
And better were it thus to die, by far,
Than, living, fail of that intent for which 190
We haunt this place, and still from day to day
Assemble. There is many a one whose wish
And hope are strong to wed Penelope,
The consort of Ulysses; but so soon
As he shall see and try the hero's bow 195
Let him with marriage presents seek to gain
Some other bride among the long-robed dames,
Achaia's daughters. Let him leave the queen
To wed the suitor who shall bring to her
The richest gifts, and him whom fate appoints." 200

He spake, and setting down the bow to lean
Against the firm smooth panels of the wall,
And the swift shaft against the bow's fair curve,
He took again his seat upon the throne
From which he rose. Antinoüs then took up 205
The word and answered, and reproached him thus: —

“What words are these, Leiodes, that have passed
Thy lips? harsh words and fearful, — that this bow
Shall take from many princes here the breath
Of life, and all because thou hast no power 210

To bend it? Thy good mother bore thee not
To draw the bow and send the arrow forth,
But others of the noble suitor-train
Are here, by whom this bow shall yet be bent."

Then to Melanthius, keeper of the goats, 215
Antinoüs gave this bidding. "Light a fire
With speed, Melanthius, in the palace here,
And place a seat before it. Lay a fleece
Upon the seat, and bring us from within
An ample roll of fat, that we young men 220
By warming and anointing may make soft
The bow, and draw the cord, and end the strife."

He spake; Melanthius kindled instantly
A glowing fire, and near it placed a seat,
And on the seat a fleece, and from within 225
Brought forth an ample roll of fat, with which
The young men, having warmed it, smeared the bow
And tried, but bent it not, too weak by far
For such a feat. Antinoüs kept aloof,
He and the godlike youth Eurymachus, 230
Two princes who in might excelled the rest.

The herdsman of Ulysses meantime left
The palace, and with him the swineherd went,
And after them Ulysses. When they all

Were now without the gate and palace court, 235
Ulysses spake to them, and blandly said : —

“Herdsmen and swineherd, shall I say to you
Somewhat, or shall I keep it back? My heart
Moves me to say it. Should Ulysses come,
Led by some god, and suddenly, what aid 240
Would he receive from you? Would ye take part
With him, or with the suitors? Frankly speak;
And tell me what your hearts would bid you do.”

Then answered thus the keeper of the herds :
“O Father Jove! wouldst thou but grant my wish, 245
And let some god conduct him hither, then
Shall it be seen what might is in these hands!”

So also did Eumæus offer prayer
To all the deities, that speedily
The wise Ulysses might return; and when 250
The chief perceived in all its truth the thought
And purpose of their hearts, he spake and said : —

“Know, then, that I myself am he, at home
Again, returning in the twentieth year,
And after many sufferings, to the land 255
That saw my birth. I know that I am come
Welcome to you alone of all my train
Of servants, since I hear no others pray

For my return. Hear, then, what I engage
 Shall be hereafter. If some god o'ercome 260
 For me these arrogant suitors, I will give
 To each of you a wife and lands, and build
 For each a house near mine, and ye shall be
 The friends and brothers of Telemachus
 Thenceforth. And now, that ye may surely know 265
 And trust me, I will show a token here, —
 A scar which once the white tooth of a boar
 Made, when long since, on the Parnassian mount,
 I hunted with Autolycus's sons."

Thus having said, he drew from the broad scar 270
 The covering rags; they looked and knew it well,
 And wept, and round Ulysses threw their arms,
 And kissed in that embrace the hero's head
 And shoulders, while Ulysses also kissed
 Their heads and hands. The sun would have gone down
 Upon their weeping, but for him. He said: — 276

"Cease now from tears, lest some one from the hall
 Should see us, and report of us within.
 Now let us enter, not in company, —
 I first, and ye thereafter, one by one, 280
 And let the sign be this: the others all —
 The haughty suitors — will refuse to me

The bow and quiver. When thou bearest it,
My noble friend Eumæus, through the halls,
Bring it and place it in my hands, and charge 285
The women to make fast the solid doors ;
And then if any one of them should hear
A groan or other noise of men within,
Let her not issue forth, but silently
Pursue her task. Meantime be it thy care, 290
My good Philætius, with a key to lock
The portals of the court and fix the chain."

Thus having said, into that noble pile
He passed again, and took the seat from which
He lately rose, and afterward, in turn, 295
Entered the servants of the godlike chief.

Eurymachus was busy with the bow,
Turning and warming it before the blaze
On both its sides. He could not bend it thus.
There came a deep sigh from his boastful heart, 300
And greatly was he vexed, and sadly said : —

"Alas ! great cause of grief indeed is here
For me and all. 'T is not that I lament
So much the losing of the bride, although
That also vexes me, — there yet remain 305
Many fair ladies of the Achaian stock,

Both in the sea-girt lands of Ithaca
And other regions, — yet if we be found
To fall in strength of arm so far below
The great Ulysses that we cannot bend 310
His bow, our sons will hear of it with shame.”

Eupeithes' son, Antinoös, answered thus :
“Not so, Eurymachus, as thou thyself
Shouldst know. This day is held a solemn feast
Of Phæbus by the people. Who would draw 315
The bow to-day? Nay, lay it by in peace,
And suffer all the rings to stand as now ;
For no man, as I think, will dare to come
Into the palace of Laertes' son
And take them hence. Let him who bears the cup 320
Begin to serve the wine, that, having poured
Part to the gods, we may lay down the bow,
And with the morning let Melanthius come, —
The goatherd, — bringing with him from the flock
The choicest goats, that we may burn the thighs, 325
An offering to the god of archery,
Apollo. Then will we again essay
The bow, and bring the contest to an end.”

So spake Antinoös, and they all approved.
Then heralds came, and on the suitors' hands 330

Poured water ; youths filled up the cups with wine,
Beginning at the right, and gave to each
His share ; and when they all had poured a part,
And each had drunk, the shrewd Ulysses thus
With artful speech bespake the suitor-train : —

335

“Hearken, ye suitors of the illustrious queen,
To what my heart is prompting me to say ;
But chiefly to Eurymachus I make
My suit, and to Antinoös, who so well
Hath counselled to lay by the bow and trust
The gods. To-morrow Phœbus will bestow
The needed strength on whomsoe’er he will ;
But let me take that polished bow, and try
Among you, whether still the power that dwelt
In these once pliant limbs abides in them,
Or whether haply it has passed from me
Amid my wanderings and a life of want.”

340

345

He spake, and all were vehemently moved ,
With anger, for they feared that he would bend
The bow, and thus Antinoös, railing, spake : —

350

“Thou worthless vagabond, without a spark
Of reason, art thou not content to sit
And banquet with the proudest, where no part
Of all the feast escapes thee, hearing all

That we are saying, which no other man, 355
Stranger and beggar, is allowed to hear !
This good wine makes thee foolish, as wine oft
Makes those who swallow it too greedily,
And drink not with due stint. It maddened once
Eurytion, the famed Centaur, in the halls 360
Of the large-souled Pirithoüs. He had come
Among the Lapithæ, and when inflamed
With wine to madness, in those very halls
Did lawless deeds. The heroes were incensed.
They rushed upon him, dragged him through the porch
And out of doors, and there cut off his nose 366
And ears, and he departed, frenzied still,
And bearing in bewilderment of mind
His punishment, whence war arose between
Centaurs and men ; yet surely he had brought 370
The evil on himself, when overcome
With wine. Such fearful mischief I foretell
Will light on thee, if thou shouldst bend this bow,
Nor canst thou hope for favor here among
The people. We will send thee speedily, 375
In a black galley, to King Echetus,
The enemy of human kind, from whom
Thou shalt find no escape. Drink, then, in peace

Thy wine, and seek no strife with younger men."

Then spake the sage Penelope again :

380

"Truly, Antinoös, it becomes thee not,

Nor is it just, to vex the stranger guests

Who seek the palace of Telemachus.

Dost thou, then, think that, should this stranger bend,

Proud as he is of his great strength of arm,

385

The mighty bow that once Ulysses bore,

He leads me hence a bride? No hope of that

Is in his heart, and let no one of you

Who banquet here allow a thought like that

To vex him ; 't is a thing that cannot be."

390

Then to the queen, Eurymachus, the son

Of Polybus, replied : "We do not fear,

Sage daughter of Icarius, that this man

Will lead thee hence a bride ; it cannot be.

We fear the speech of men and women both.

395

The very meanest of the Achaian race

Will say : 'Degenerate men are these, who seek

To wed the consort of a glorious chief,

Not one of whom can draw the bow he bore ;

And now there comes a wandering beggar-man,

400

Who draws the bow with ease, and sends a shaft

Through all the rings of steel.' Thus will they speak,

And this will be to us a cause of shame !”

And then the sage Penelope rejoined :

“Eurymachus, it cannot be that those 405
Should earn the general praise who make the wealth
Of a most worthy man their spoil, and bring
Dishonor on his house. The stranger’s frame
Is powerful and well knit ; he claims to be
Of noble parentage. Now let him take 410
The bow, and we will see the event ; but this
I promise, and will make my promise good,
If he should bend it, — if Apollo give
To him that glory, — he shall have from me
A tunic and a cloak, fair garments both, 415
And a keen javelin, his defence against
Both dogs and men, a two-edged sword besides,
And sandals for his feet, and I engage
To send him whither he desires to go.”

Then spake discreet Telemachus again : 420

“Mother, in all Achaia there is none
Who has more power than I can claim, to grant
Or to deny the bow to whom I will.
No one of those who rule the rugged coast
Of Ithaca, or isles where Elis breeds 425
Her mares, may interpose to thwart my will,

If on the stranger I bestow the bow
To be his own, and bid him take it hence.
Withdraw, O queen, into thy bower ; direct
Thy household tasks, the distaff and the web, 430
And bid thy maidens speed the work. The bow
Belongs to men, and most to me ; for here,
Within these walls, the authority is mine."

The queen, astonished, heard him and withdrew,
But kept her son's wise sayings in her heart. 435
And then ascending to her bower, among
Her maids, she wept her well-beloved lord,
Ulysses, till the blue-eyed Pallas came,
And poured upon her lids the balm of sleep.

Meantime the worthy swineherd bore the bow 440
In hand, and all along the palace-halls
The suitor-crew were chiding him aloud,
And thus an insolent youth among them spake : —

"Thou awkward swineherd, whither goest thou
With the curved bow? Thy own fleet dogs which thou
Hast reared shall soon devour thee, far from men 446
And midst thy herds of swine, if we find grace
With Phœbus and the other deathless gods."

Such were their words ; the swineherd where he stood
Set down the bow in fear, for many a voice 450

Called to him in the hall. On the other side
Shouted Telemachus with threatening words : —

“Nay, father, carry on the bow, nor think
To stop at every man’s command ; lest I,
Though younger than thyself, cast stones at thee, 455
And chase thee to the fields, for I in strength
Excel thee. Would that I excelled as far
In strength of arm the suitors in these halls,
Then would I roughly through the palace-gates
Drive many who are plotting mischief now.” 460

He spake, and all with hearty laughter heard
His words, and for their sake allowed their wrath
Against the prince to cool. The swineherd went
Forward, along the hall, and, drawing near
The wise Ulysses, gave into his hands 465
The bow ; and then he called the nurse aside,
Dame Eurycleia, and bespake her thus : —

“Sage Eurycleia, from Telemachus
I charge thee to make fast the solid doors,
And then, if any of the maids should hear 470
A groan or other noise of men within,
Let her not issue forth, but silently
Pursue the task in hand, and keep her place.”

He spake, nor were his words in vain. The dame

Made fast the doors of that magnificent hall, 475
While silently Philæti^{us} hastened forth
And locked the portals of the high-walled court.
A cable of the bark of Byblos lay
Beneath the portico, — it once had served
A galley, — and with this the herdsman tied 480
The portals, and, returning, took the seat
Whence he had risen, but ever kept his eye
Fixed on his lord. Ulysses, meantime, held
The bow, and, turning it, intently eyed
Side after side, and tried each part in turn, 485
For fear that worms, while he was far away,
Had pierced the horn. At this, a youth among
The suitors, turning to his neighbor, said : —

“Lo an inspector and a judge of bows!
Perhaps he has a bow like that at home, 490
Or else would make one like it. How he shifts
The thing with busy hands from side to side, —
The vagabond, well trained in knavish tricks!”

Then also said another insolent youth :
“May he in all things be as fortunate 495
As now, when he shall try to bend that bow!”

Such was their talk ; but when the wary chief
Had poised and shrewdly scanned the mighty bow,

Then, as a singer, skilled to play the harp,
Stretches with ease on its new fastenings 500
A string, the twisted entrails of a sheep,
Made fast at either end, so easily
Ulysses bent that mighty bow. He took
And drew the cord with his right hand ; it twanged
With a clear sound as when a swallow screams. 505
The suitors were dismayed, and all grew pale.
Jove in loud thunder gave a sign from heaven.
The much enduring chief, Ulysses, heard
With joy the friendly omen, which the son
Of crafty Saturn sent him. He took up 510
A winged arrow, that before him lay
Upon a table, drawn ; the others still
Were in the quiver's womb ; the Greeks were yet
To feel them. This he set with care against
The middle of the bow, and toward him drew 515
The cord and arrow-notch, just where he sat,
And, aiming opposite, let fly the shaft.
He missed no ring of all ; from first to last
The brass-tipped arrow threaded every one.
Then to Telemachus Ulysses said : — 520

“Telemachus, the stranger sitting here
Hath not disgraced thee. I have neither missed

The rings, nor found it hard to bend the bow ;
Nor has my manly strength decayed, as these
Who seek to bring me to contempt pretend ;
And now the hour is come when we prepare
A supper for the Achaïans, while the day
Yet lasts, and after supper the delights
Of song and harp, which nobly grace a feast.”

525

He spake, and nodded to Telemachus,
His well-beloved son, who girded on
His trenchant sword, and took in hand his spear,
And, armed with glittering brass for battle, came
And took his station by his father's seat.

530

BOOK XXII.

THEN did Ulysses cast his rags aside,
And, leaping to the threshold, took his stand
On its broad space, with bow and quiver filled
With arrows. At his feet the hero poured
The winged shafts, and to the suitors called : —

5

“That difficult strife is ended. Now I take
Another mark, which no man yet has hit.
Now shall I see if I attain my aim,
And, by the aid of Phœbus, win renown.”

10

He spake ; and, turning, at Antinoüs aimed
The bitter shaft, — Antinoüs, who just then
Had grasped a beautiful two-eared cup of gold,
About to drink the wine. He little thought
Of wounds and death ; for who, when banqueting
Among his fellows, could suspect that one
Alone against so many men would dare,
However bold, to plan his death, and bring
On him the doom of fate? Ulysses struck

15

The suitor with the arrow at the throat.

The point came through the tender neck behind, 20

Sideways he sank to earth ; his hand let fall

The cup ; the dark blood in a thick warm stream

Gushed from the nostrils of the smitten man.

He spurned the table with his feet, and spilled

The viands ; bread and roasted meats were flung 25

To lie polluted on the floor. Then rose

The suitors in a tumult, when they saw

The fallen man ; from all their seats they rose

Throughout the hall, and to the massive walls

Looked eagerly ; there hung no buckler there, 30

No sturdy lance for them to wield. They called

Thus to Ulysses with indignant words : —

“Stranger ! in evil hour hast thou presumed

To aim at men ; and thou shalt henceforth bear

Part in no other contest. Even now 35

Is thy destruction close to thee. Thy hand

Hath slain the noblest youth in Ithaca.

The vultures shall devour thy flesh for this.”

So each one said ; they deemed he had not slain

The suitor wittingly ; nor did they see, 40

Blind that they were, the doom which in that hour

Was closing round them all. Then with a frown

The wise Ulysses looked on them, and said : —

“Dogs! ye had thought I never would come back
From Ilium’s coast, and therefore ye devoured 45
My substance here, and offered violence
To my maid-servants, and pursued my wife
As lovers, while I lived. Ye dreaded not
The gods who dwell in the great heaven, nor feared
Vengeance hereafter from the hands of men ; 50
And now destruction overhangs you all.”

He spake, and all were pale with fear, and each
Looked round for some escape from death. Alone
Eurymachus found voice, and answered thus : —

“If thou indeed be he, the Ithacan 55
Ulysses, now returned to thine old home,
Well hast thou spoken of the many wrongs
Done to thee by the Achaians in thy house
And in thy fields. But there the man lies slain
Who was the cause of all. Antinoüs first 60
Began this course of wrong. Nor were his thoughts
So much of marriage as another aim, —
Which Saturn’s son denied him, — to bear rule
Himself o’er those who till the pleasant fields
Of Ithaca, first having slain thy son 65
In ambush. But he now has met his fate.

Spare, then, thy people. We will afterward
Make due amends in public for the waste
Here in thy palace of the food and wine.
For each of us shall bring thee twenty beeves,
And brass and gold, until thy heart shall be
Content. Till then we cannot blame thy wrath."

70

Sternly the wise Ulysses frowned, and said :
"Eurymachus, if thou shouldst offer me
All that thou hast, thy father's wealth entire,
And add yet other gifts, not even then
Would I refrain from bloodshed, ere my hand
Avenged my wrongs upon the suitor-crew.
Choose then to fight or flee, whoever hopes
Escape from death and fate; yet none of you
Will now, I think, avoid that bitter doom."

75

80

He spake. At once their knees and head grew faint,
And thus Eurymachus bespake the rest : —

"This man, O friends, to his untamable arm
Will give no rest, but with that bow in hand,
And quiver, will send forth from where he stands
His shafts, till he has slain us all. Prepare
For combat then, and draw your swords, and hold
The tables up against his deadly shafts,
And rush together at him as one man,

85

90

And drive him from the threshold through the door.
Then, hurrying through the city, let us sound
The alarm, and soon he will have shot his last."

He spake, and, drawing his keen two-edged sword
Of brass, sprang toward him with a dreadful cry, 95
Just as the great Ulysses, sending forth
An arrow, smote the suitor on the breast,
Beside the nipple. The swift weapon stood
Fixed in his liver; to the ground he flung
The sword, and, reeling giddily around 100
The table, fell; he brought with him to earth
The viands and the double cup, and smote
The pavement with his forehead heavily,
And in great agony. With both his feet
He struck and shook his throne, and darkness came 105
Over his eyes. Then rushed Amphinomus
Against the glorious chief, and drew his sword
To thrust him from the door. Telemachus
O'ertook him, and between his shoulders drove
A brazen lance. Right through his breast it went, 110
And he fell headlong, with his forehead dashed
Against the floor. Telemachus drew back,
And left his long spear in Amphinomus,
Lest, while he drew it forth, some one among

The Achaïans might attack him with the sword, 115
And thrust him through or hew him down. In haste
He reached his father's side, and quickly said : —

“Now, father, will I bring to thee a shield,
Two javelins, and a helmet wrought of brass,
Well fitted to the temples. I will case 120
Myself in armor, and will also give
Arms to the swineherd, and to him who tends
The beeves ; for men in armor combat best.”

And wise Ulysses answered : “Bring them then,
And quickly, while I yet have arrows here 125
For my defence, lest, when I am alone,
They drive me from my station at the door.”

He spake. Obedient to his father's word,
Telemachus was soon within the room
In which the glorious arms were laid. He took 130
Four bucklers thence, eight spears, and helmets four
Of brass, each darkened with its horsehair crest,
And bore them forth, and quickly stood again
Beside his father. But he first encased
His limbs in brass ; his followers also put 135
Their shining armor on, and took their place
Beside the wise Ulysses, eminent
In shrewd devices. He, while arrows yet

Were ready to his hand, with every aim
Brought down a suitor ; side by side they fell. 140
But when the shafts were spent, the archer-king
Leaned his good bow beside the shining wall,
Against a pillar of the massive pile,
And round his shoulders slung a fourfold shield,
And crowned his martial forehead with a helm 145
Wrought fairly, with a heavy horsehair crest
That nodded gallantly above, and took
In hand the two stout lances tipped with brass.

In the strong wall there was a postern door,
And, near the outer threshold of the pile, 150
A passage from it to a narrow lane,
Closed with well-fitting doors. Ulysses bade
The noble swineherd take his station there,
And guard it well, as now the only way
Of entrance. Agelaüs called aloud 155
To all his fellows, and bespake them thus : —

“ Friends ! will no one among you all go up
To yonder postern door, and make our plight
Known to the people ? Then the alarm would spread,
And this man haply will have shot his last.” 160

Melanthius, keeper of the goats, replied :
“ Nay, noble Agelaüs ; ’t is too near

The palace gate ; the entrance of the lane
Is narrow, and a single man, if brave,
Against us all might hold it. I will bring 165
Arms from the chamber to equip you all ;
For there within, and nowhere else, I deem,
Ulysses and his son laid up their arms."

Thus having said, the keeper of the goats,
Melanthius, climbed the palace stairs, and gained 170
The chamber of Ulysses. Taking thence
Twelve shields, as many spears, as many helms
Of brass, with each its heavy horsehair plume,
He came, and gave them to the suitors' hands.
Then sank the hero's heart, and his knees shook 175
As he beheld the suitors putting on
Their armor, and uplifting their long spears.
The mighty task appalled him, and he thus
Bespake Telemachus with winged words : —

"Telemachus, some woman here, or else 180
Melanthius, makes the battle hard for us."

And thus discreet Telemachus replied : —
"Father, I erred in this. I was the cause,
And no one else ; I left the solid door
Ajar ; the spy was shrewder far than I. 185
Now, good Eumæus, shut the chamber door,

And see if any of the palace-maids
Have brought these arms, or if I rightly fix
The guilt upon Melanthius, Dolius' son."

So talked they with each other, while again 190
Melanthius, stealing toward the chamber, thought
To bring yet other shining weapons thence.
The noble swineherd marked him as he went,
And quickly drawing near Ulysses said : —

"Son of Laertes! nobly born and wise! 195
The knave whom we suspect is on his way
Up to thy chamber. Tell me now, I pray,
And plainly, shall I make an end of him,
If I may prove the stronger man, or bring
The wretch into thy presence, to endure 200
The vengeance due to all the iniquities
Plotted by him against thee in these halls?"

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :
"Telemachus and I will keep at bay
The suitors in this place, however fierce 205
Their onset, while ye two bind fast his hands
And feet behind his back, and bringing him
Into the chamber, with the door made fast
Behind you, tie him with a double cord,
And draw him up a lofty pillar close 210

To the timbers of the roof, that, swinging there,
He may live long and suffer grievous pain."

He spake; they hearkened and obeyed, and went
Up to the chamber unperceived by him
Who stood within and searched a nook for arms. 215
On each side of the entrance, by its posts,
They waited for Melanthius. Soon appeared
The goatherd at the threshold of the room,
Bearing a beautiful helmet in one hand,
And in the other a broad ancient shield, 220
Defaced by age and mould. Laertes once,
The hero, bore it when a youth, but now
Long time it lay unused, with gaping seams.

They sprang and seized the goatherd, dragging him
Back to the chamber by the hair; and there 225
They cast him, in an agony of fear,
Upon the floor, and bound his hands and feet
With a stout cord behind his back, as bade
The great Ulysses, much-enduring son
Of old Laertes. Round him then they looped 230
A double cord, and swung him up beside
A lofty pillar, till they brought him near
The timbers of the roof. And then didst thou,
Eumæus, say to him in jeering words:—

“Melanthius, there mayst thou keep watch all night
On a soft bed, a fitting place for thee; 236
And when the Mother of the Dawn shall come
Upon her golden seat from ocean’s streams,
Thou wilt not fail to see her. Thou mayst then
Drive thy goats hither for the suitors’ feast.” 240

They left him in that painful plight, and put
Their armor on, and closed the shining door,
And went, and by Ulysses, versed in wiles,
Stood breathing valor. Four were they who stood
Upon that threshold, while their foes within 245
Were many and brave. Then Pallas, child of Jove,
Drew near, like Mentor both in shape and voice.
Ulysses saw her, and rejoiced and said : —

“Come, Mentor, to the aid of one who loves
And has befriended thee, thy peer in age.” 250

Thus said Ulysses, but believed he spake
To Pallas, scatterer of hosts. Fierce shouts
Came from the suitors in the hall, and first,
Thus Agelaüs railed, Damastor’s son : —

“Mentor, let not Ulysses wheedle thee 255
To join him, and make war on us, for this
Our purpose is, and it will be fulfilled :
When by our hands the father and the son

Are slain, thou also shalt be put to death
For this attempt, and thy own head shall be 260
The forfeit. When we shall have taken thus
Thy life with our good weapons, we will seize
On all thou hast, on all thy wealth within
Thy dwelling or without, and, mingling it
With the possessions of Ulysses, leave 265
Within thy palaces no son of thine
Or daughter living, and no virtuous wife
Of thine, abiding here in Ithaca."

He spake, and woke new anger in the heart
Of Pallas, and she chid Ulysses thus: — 270

"Ulysses, thou art not, in might of arm
And courage, what thou wert when waging war
Nine years without a pause against the men
Of Troy for Helen's sake, the child of Jove,
And many didst thou slay in deadly strife, 275
And Priam's city, with its spacious streets,
Was taken through thy counsels. How is it
That, coming to thy own possessions here
And thy own palace, thou dost sadly find
Thy ancient valor fail thee in the strife 280
Against the suitors? Now draw near, my friend,
And stand by me, and see what I shall do,

And own that Mentor, son of Alcimus,
Amid a press of foes requites thy love."

She spake, but gave not to Ulysses yet 285
The certain victory ; for she meant to put
To further proof the courage and the might
Both of Ulysses and his emulous son.

To the broad palace roof she rose, and sat
In shape a swallow. Agelaüs now, 290
Damastor's son, cheered on with gallant words

His friends ; so also did Amphimedon,
Eurynomus, and Demoptolemus,
Polyctor's son, Peisander, and with these
Sagacious Polybus. These six excelled 295

In valor all the suitors who survived,
And they were fighting for their lives. The bow
And the fleet shafts had smitten down their peers.
Thus to his fellows Agelaüs spake : —

" O friends, this man will now be forced to stay 300
His fatal hand. See, Mentor leaves his side,
After much empty boasting, and those four
Are at the entrance gate alone. Now aim
At him with your long spears, — not all at once,
Let six first hurl their weapons, and may Jove 305
Grant that we strike Ulysses down, and win

Great glory! For the others at his side
We care but little, if their leader fall."

He spake; they hearkened. Eagerly they cast
Their lances. Pallas made their aim to err. 310

One struck a pillar of the massive pile;
One struck the panelled door; one ashen shaft,
Heavy with metal, rang against the wall.

And when they had escaped that flight of spears,
Hurled from the crowd, the much-enduring man, 315
Ulysses, thus to his companions said: —

"Now is the time, my friends, to send our spears
Into the suitor-crowd, who, not content
With wrongs already done us, seek our lives."

He spake, and, aiming opposite, they cast 320
Their spears. The weapon which Ulysses flung
Slew Demoptolemus; his son struck down
Euryades; the herdsman smote to death
Peisander, and the swineherd Elatus.

These at one moment fell, and bit the dust 325
Of the broad floor. Back flew the suitor-crowd
To a recess; and after them the four
Rushed on, and plucked their weapons from the dead.

Again the suitors threw their spears; again
Did Pallas cause their aim to err. One struck 330

A pillar of the massive pile, and one
The panelled door ; another ashen shaft,
Heavy with metal, rang against the wall.
Yet did the weapon of Amphimedon
Strike lightly on the wrist Telemachus. 335

The brass just tore the skin. Ctesippus grazed
The shoulder of Eumæus with his spear,
Above the shield ; the spear flew over it
And fell to earth. Then they who stood beside
The sage Ulysses, versed in wiles, once more 340
Flung their keen spears. The spoiler of walled towns,
Ulysses, slew Eurydamas ; his son
Struck down Amphimedon ; the swineherd took
The life of Polybus ; the herdsman smote
Ctesippus, driving through his breast the spear, 345
And called to him, and gloried o'er his fall : —

“ O son of Polythereses, prompt to rail !
Beware of uttering, in thy foolish pride,
Big words hereafter ; leave it to the gods,
Mightier are they than we. See, I repay 350
The hospitable gift of a steer's foot,
Which once the great Ulysses from thy hand
Received, as he was passing through this hall.”

Thus spake the keeper of the horned herd.

Meantime, Ulysses slew Damastor's son 355
With his long spear, in combat hand to hand.
Telemachus next smote Evenor's son,
Leiocritus. He sent the brazen spear
Into his bowels; through his body passed
The weapon, and he fell upon his face. 360
His forehead struck the floor. Then Pallas held
On high her fatal ægis. From the roof
She showed it, and their hearts grew wild with fear.
They fled along the hall as flees a herd
Of kine, when the swift gadfly suddenly 365
Has come among them, and has scattered them
In springtime, when the days are growing long.
Meantime, like falcons with curved claws and beaks,
That, coming from the mountain summits, pounce
Upon the smaller birds, and make them fly 370
Close to the fields among the snares they dread,
And seize and slay, nor can the birds resist
Or fly, and at the multitude of prey
The fowlers' hearts are glad; so did the four
Smite right and left the suitors hurrying through 375
The palace-hall, and fearful moans arose
As heads were smitten by the sword, and all
The pavement swam with blood. Leiodes then

Sprang forward to Ulysses, clasped his knees,
And supplicated him with winged words : —

380

“I come, Ulysses, to thy knees. Respect
And spare me. Never have I said or done,
Among the women of thy household, aught
That could be blamed, and I essayed to check
The wrongs of other suitors. Little heed
They gave my counsels, nor withheld their hands
From evil deeds, and therefore have they drawn
Upon themselves an evil fate. But I,
Who have done nothing, — I their soothsayer, —
Must I too die? Then is there no reward
Among the sons of men for worthy deeds.”

385

390

Ulysses, the sagacious, frowned and said :
“If then, in truth, thou wert as thou dost boast,
A soothsayer among these men, thy prayer
Within these palace-walls must oft have been
That far from me might be the blessed day
Of my return, and that my wife might take
With thee her lot, and bring forth sons to thee,
And therefore shalt thou not escape from death.”

395

He spake, and seizing with his powerful hand
A falchion lying near, which from the grasp
Of Agelaüs fell when he was slain,

400

Just at the middle of the neck he smote
Leiodes, while the words were on his lips,
And the head fell, and lay amid the dust. 405

Phemius, the son of Terpius, skilled in song,
Alone escaped the bitter doom of death.
He by constraint had sung among the train
Of suitors, and was standing now beside
The postern door, and held his sweet-toned lyre, 410
And pondered whether he should leave the hall,
And sit before the altar of the great
Herceian Jove, where, with Laertes, once
Ulysses oft had burned the thighs of beeves,
Or whether he should fling himself before 415
Ulysses, as a suppliant, at his knees.

This to his thought seemed wisest, — to approach
Laertes' son, and clasp his knees. He placed
His sweet harp on the floor, between the cup
And silver-studded seat, and went and clasped 420
The hero's knees, and said in winged words : —

“ I come, Ulysses, to thy knees. Respect
And spare me. It will be a grief to thee,
Hereafter, shouldst thou slay a bard, who sings
For gods and men alike. I taught myself 425
This art ; some god has breathed into my mind

Songs of all kinds, and I could sing to thee
As to a god. O, seek not then to take
My life! Thy own dear son Telemachus
Will bear me witness that not willingly 430
Nor for the sake of lucre did I come
To sing before the suitors at their feasts
And in thy palace, but was forced to come
By numbers and by mightier men than I."

He ceased; Telemachus, the mighty, heard 435
And thus bespake his father at his side: —

"Refrain; smite not the guiltless with the sword;
And be the herald, Medon, also spared,
Who in our palace had the care of me
Through all my childhood; if he be not slain 440
Already by Philætiüs, or by him
Who tends the swine, or if he have not met
Thyself, when thou wert ranging through the hall."

He spake, and the sagacious Medon heard,
As crouching underneath a throne he lay, 445
Wrapped in the skin just taken from a steer,
To hide from the black doom of death. He came
From where he lay, and quickly flung aside
The skin, and, springing forward, clasped the knees
Of the young prince, and said in winged words: — 450

“Dear youth, behold me here ; be merciful ;
Speak to thy father, that he put not forth
His sword to slay me, eager as he is
For vengeance, and incensed against the men
Who haunt these halls to make his wealth a spoil, 455
And in their folly hold thyself in scorn.”

He spake ; the sage Ulysses smiled and said :
“Be of good cheer, since this my son protects
And rescues thee. Now mayst thou well perceive,
And say to other men, how much more safe 460
Is doing good than evil. Go thou forth
Out of this slaughter to the open court,
Thou and the illustrious bard, and sit ye there,
While here within I do what yet I must.”

He spake ; they moved away and left the hall, 465
And by the altar of almighty Jove
Sat looking round them, still in fear of death.

Meantime, Ulysses passed with searching look
O'er all the place, to find if yet remained
A single one of all the suitor-crew 470
Alive, and skulking from his bitter doom.
He saw that all had fallen in blood and dust,
Many as fishes on the shelving beach
Drawn from the hoary deep by those who tend

The nets with myriad meshes. Poured abroad 475
Upon the sand, while panting to return
To the salt sea they lie, till the hot sun
Takes their life from them ; so the suitors lay
Heaped on each other. Then Ulysses took
The word, and thus bespake Telemachus :— 480

“Go now, Telemachus, and hither call
The nurse, Dame Eurycleia. I would say
Somewhat to her that comes into my thought.”

So spake the chief. Telemachus obeyed
The word, and smote the door, and called the nurse :— 485

“Come hither, ancient dame, who hast in charge
To oversee the women in their tasks ;
My father calls thee, and would speak with thee.”

He spake ; nor flew the word in vain ; she flung
Apart the portals of those stately rooms, 490
And came in haste. Before her went the prince.
Among the corpses of the slain they found
Ulysses, stained with blood, and grimed with dust.
As when a lion, who has just devoured
A bullock of the pasture, moves away, 495
A terror to the sight, with breast and cheeks
All bathed in blood ; so did Ulysses seem,
His feet and hands steeped in the blood of men.

She, when she saw the corpses and the pools
Of blood, and knew the mighty task complete, 500
Was moved to shout for joy. Ulysses checked
Her eager zeal, and said in winged words : —

“ Rejoice in spirit, dame, but calm thyself,
And shout not. To exult aloud o’er those
Who lie in death is an unholy thing. 505

The pleasure of the gods, and their own guilt,
Brought death on these ; for no respect had they
To any of their fellow-men, — the good
Or evil, — whosoever he might be
That came to them, and thus on their own heads 510
They drew this fearful fate. Now name to me
The women of the palace ; let me know
Who is disloyal, and who innocent.”

Then thus the well-beloved nurse replied :
“ My son, I will declare the truth. There dwell 515
Here in thy palace fifty serving-maids,
Whom we have taught to work, to comb the fleece
And serve the household. Twelve of these have walked
The way of shame. To me they give no heed,
Nor to Penelope herself. Thy son 520
Has just now grown to manhood, and the queen
Has never suffered him to rule the maids ;

But let me now, ascending to her room, —
The royal bower, — apprise thy wife, to whom
Some deity has sent the gift of sleep.”

525

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :
“Wake her not yet, but go and summon all
The women who have wrought these shameful deeds.”

He spake ; the matron through the palace went
To seek the women, and to bid them come.
Meanwhile, Ulysses called Telemachus,
The herdsman and the swineherd to his side,
And thus commanded them with winged words : —

530

“Begin to carry forth the dead, and call
The women to your aid ; and next make clean,
With water and with thirsty sponges, all
The sumptuous thrones and tables. When ye thus
Have put the hall in order, lead away
The serving-maids, and in the space between
The kitchen vault and solid outer wall
Smite them with your long swords till they give up
The ghost, and lose the memory evermore
Of secret meetings with the suitor-train.”

535

540

He spake ; the women came, lamenting loud
With many tears, and carried forth the dead,
Leaning upon each other as they went,

545

And placed them underneath the portico
Of the walled court. Ulysses gave command,
Hastening their task, as all unwillingly
They bore the corpses forth. With water next, 550
And thirsty sponges in their hands, they cleansed
The sumptuous thrones and tables. Then the prince,
Telemachus, with shovels cleared the floor,
The herdsman and the swineherd aiding him,
And made the women bear the rubbish forth. 555
And now when all within was once again
In seemly order, they led forth the maids
From that fair pile into the space between
The kitchen vault and solid outer wall,
A narrow space from which was no escape, 560
And thus discreet Telemachus began : —

“I will not take away these creatures’ lives
By a pure death, — these who so long have heaped
Reproaches on my mother’s head and mine,
And played the wanton with the suitor-crew.” 565

He spake, and made the hawser of a ship
Fast to a lofty shaft ; the other end
He wound about the kitchen vault. So high
He stretched it that the feet of none who hung
On it might touch the ground. As when a flock 570

Of broad-winged thrushes or wild pigeons strike
A net within a thicket, as they seek
Their perch, and find unwelcome durance there,
So hung the women, with their heads a-row,
And cords about their necks, that they might die 575
A miserable death. A little while,
And but a little, quivered their loose feet
In air. They led Melanthius from the hall
And through the porch, cut off his nose and ears,
Wrenched out the parts of shame, a bloody meal 580
For dogs, and in their anger from the trunk
Lopped hands and feet. Then having duly washed
Their feet and hands, they came into the hall,
And to Ulysses ; they had done their work.
And then to the dear nurse Ulysses said : — 585

“Bring sulphur, dame, the cure of noxious air,
And fire, that I may purge the hall with smoke ;
And go, and bid Penelope come down,
With her attendant women, and command
That all the handmaids of the household come.” 590

And thus in turn Dame Eurycleia spake :
“Well hast thou said, my son, but suffer me
To bring thee clothes, a tunic and a cloak,
Nor with those rags on thy broad shoulders stand

In thine own palace ; it becomes thee not."

595

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :

" First let a fire be kindled in this hall."

He spake, and Eurycleia, the dear nurse,

Obedyed, and brought the sulphur and the fire.

Ulysses steeped in smoke the royal pile,

600

Both hall and court. The matron, passing through

The stately palace of Ulysses, climbed

The stair to find and summon all the maids.

And forth they issued, bearing in their hands

Torches, and, crowding round Ulysses, gave

605

Glad greeting, seized his hands, embraced him, kissed

His hands and brow and shoulders. The desire

To weep for joy o'ercame the chief ; his eyes

O'erflowed with tears ; he sobbed ; he knew them all.

BOOK XXIII.

UP to the royal bower the matron went
With an exulting heart, to tell the queen
That her beloved husband was within.
With knees that faltered not, and quick light step
She went, and, standing by her mistress, said : — 5
“Awake, Penelope, dear child, and see
With thine own eyes what thou hast pined for long.
Ulysses has returned ; thy lord is here,
Though late, and he has slain the arrogant crew
Of suitors, who disgraced his house, and made 10
His wealth a spoil, and dared insult his son.”

And thus discreet Penelope replied :
“The gods, dear nurse, have made thee mad ; for they
Have power to change the wisest men to fools,
And make the foolish wise, and they have warped 15
Thy mind once sound. How canst thou mock me thus,
Amidst my sorrows, with such idle tales ?
Why wake me from the pleasant sleep that closed

My lids so softly ? Never have I slept
So sweetly since Ulysses went from me
To that bad city, which no tongue should name.
Go, then ; return into the lower rooms.
Had any of my women save thyself
Brought such a message to disturb my sleep,
I would have sent her back into the hall
With angry words ; thy years are thy excuse.”

20

25

But Eurycleia, the dear nurse, rejoined :
“Nay, my dear child, I mock thee not. Most true
It is that thy Ulysses has returned,
And here he is at home, as I have said.
The stranger whom they scoffed at in the hall
Is he ; and long Telemachus has known
That he was here, but wisely kept from all
His father’s secret, till he should avenge
Upon those violent men their guilty deeds.”

30

35

She ended, and her mistress, overjoyed,
Sprang from her couch, embraced the aged dame,
And wept, and said to her in winged words : —

“Tell me, dear nurse, and truly, if indeed
Ulysses have returned as thou hast said.
How smote he those proud suitors ? — he alone,
And they so many, gathered in the hall.”

40

And thus the well-beloved nurse replied :

“I saw it not, nor knew of it. I heard
Only the moanings of the slain, while we 45
The maids, affrighted, sat in a recess
Of that well-vaulted chamber ; the firm doors
Closed us all in, until at length thy son,
Sent by his father, called me forth. I found
Ulysses standing midst the dead that lay 50
Heaped on each other, everywhere along
The solid pavement. Thou wouldst have rejoiced
To see him like a lion with the stains
Of slaughter on him. Now the suitors lie
Before the portals of the palace-court, 55
And he has kindled a great fire, and steeps
In smoke the noble hall. He bade me come
To call thee. Follow me, that ye may give
Your hearts to gladness, — for ye have endured
Great sorrows both, and your long-cherished hope 60
Is now fulfilled. He hath returned alive
To his dear home, and finds thee and his son
Yet in his palace, and hath terribly
Avenged himself upon the guilty men
Who under his own roof have done him wrong.” 65

Then spake the sage Penelope again :

“Beloved nurse, exult not overmuch,
Nor rashly boast. Well is it known to thee,
Were he to come beneath this roof again,
How welcome he would be to all, but most 70
To me and to the son to whom we gave
His being. Yet thy tidings are not true.
Some one of the immortals must have slain
The arrogant suitors, angry to behold
Their foul injustice and their many crimes ; 75
For no respect had they to mortal man,
Good he might be, or bad, whome’er they met ;
And therefore have they made an evil end.
But my Ulysses must have perished far
From Ithaca, cut off from his return.” 80

Then Eurycleia, the dear nurse, rejoined :
“What words are these, my child, that pass thy lips ?
Sayst thou, then, that thy husband, who now stands
Upon thy hearthstone, never will return ?
O slow of faith ! but thou wert ever thus. 85
Come, then, I give a certain proof. I saw
Myself, when he was at the bath, the scar
Left on him by the white tusk of a boar,
And would have told thee, but he laid his hands
Upon my mouth, and would not suffer me 90

To bear the tidings, such his forecast was.
Now follow me; I give my life in pledge.
If I deceive thee, slay me ruthlessly."

Then spake discreet Penelope again:

"Dear nurse, though thou in many things art wise, 95
Think not to scan the counsels of the gods,
Who live forever. Yet will we descend,
And meet my son, and look upon the slain,
And see the avenger by whose hand they fell."

She spake, and from the royal bower went down, 100
Uncertain whether she should stand aloof
And question there her lord, or haste to him
And clasp his hands in hers and kiss his brow.
But having passed the threshold of hewn stone,
Entering she took her seat right opposite 105
Ulysses, in the full glow of the fire,
Against the other wall. Ulysses sat
Beside a lofty column with his eyes
Cast down, and waiting for his high-born wife
To speak when she had seen him. Long she sat 110
In silence, for amazement overpowered
Her senses. Sometimes, looking in his eyes,
She saw her husband there, and then again,
Clad in those sordid weeds, she knew him not.

Then spake Telemachus, and chid her thus : —

115

“Mother, unfeeling mother ! hard of heart
Art thou ; how else couldst thou remain aloof ?
How keep from taking, at my father’s side,
Thy place, to talk with him, and question him ?
No other wife could bring herself to bear
Such distance from a husband, just returned
After long hardships, in the twentieth year
Of absence, to his native land and her.
Mother ! thy heart is harder than a stone.”

120

And thus the sage Penelope replied :

125

“Dear child, my faculties are overpowered
With wonder, and I cannot question him,
Nor even speak to him, nor fix my looks
Upon his face. But if it be indeed
Ulysses, and he have returned, we soon
Shall know each other ; there are tokens known
To both of us, to none but him and me.”

130

She ended, and the much-enduring chief
Ulysses, smiling at her words, bespoke
Telemachus at once, in winged words : —

135

“Suffer thy mother, O Telemachus,
To prove me ; she will know me better soon.
My looks are sordid, and my limbs are wrapped

In tattered raiment, therefore does she think
Meanly of me, and cannot willingly 140
Believe that I am he. But let us now
Consider what most wisely may be done.
He who hath slain, among a tribe of men,
A single one with few to avenge his death,
Flees from his kindred and his native land ; 145
But we have slain the champions of the realm,
The flower of all the youth of Ithaca.
Therefore, I pray thee, think what shall be done."

And then discreet Telemachus replied :
"Look thou to that, dear father ; for they say 150
That thou of all mankind wert wont to give
The wisest counsels. None of mortal birth
In this was deemed thy peer. We follow thee
With cheerful hearts ; nor will our courage fail,
I think, in aught that lies within our power." 155

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :
"Then will I tell thee what I deem most wise.
First take the bath, and then array yourselves
In tunics, bid the palace-maidens choose
Fresh garments ; let the godlike bard, who bears 160
The clear-toned harp, be leader, and strike up
A melody to prompt the festive dance,

That all may say who hear it from without, —
Whether the passers by or dwellers near, —
‘It is a wedding.’ Else throughout the land 165
The rumor of the slaughter we have wrought
Among the suitors may have spread before
We reach our wooded farm, and there consult
Beneath the guidance of Olympian Jove.”

He spake; they hearkened and obeyed. They took 170
The bath, and then they put their garments on.
The maids arrayed themselves; the godlike bard
Took the curved harp, and woke in all the love
Of melody, and of the graceful dance.
The spacious pile resounded to the steps 175
Of men and shapely women in their mirth,
And one who stood without was heard to say: —

“Some one, no doubt, has made the long-wooded queen
His bride at last; a worthless woman she,
Who could not, for the husband of her youth, 180
Keep his fair palace till he came again.”

Such words were said, but they who uttered them
Knew little what had passed. Eurynomè,
The matron of the palace, meantime took
Magnanimous Ulysses to the bath 185
In his own dwelling, smoothed his limbs with oil,

And threw a gorgeous mantle over him
And tunic. Pallas on the hero's head
Shed grace and majesty ; she made him seem
Taller and statelier, made his locks flow down 190
In curls like blossoms of the hyacinth,
As when a workman skilled in many arts,
And taught by Pallas and Minerva, twines
A golden border round the silver mass,
A glorious work ; so did the goddess shed 195
Grace o'er his face and form. So from the bath
He stepped, like one of the immortals, took
The seat from which he rose, right opposite
Penelope, and thus addressed the queen : —

“Lady, the dwellers of the Olympian heights 200
Have given thee an impenetrable heart
Beyond all other women. Sure I am
No other wife could bring herself to bear
Such distance from a husband just returned
After long hardships, in the twentieth year 205
Of absence, to his native land and her.
Come, nurse, prepare a bed, where by myself
I may lie down ; an iron heart is hers.”

To this the sage Penelope replied :
“Nay, sir, 't is not through pride or disregard, 210

Or through excess of wonder, that I act
Thus toward thee. Well do I remember thee
As thou wert in the day when thy good ship
Bore thee from Ithaca. Bestir thyself,
Dame Eurycleia, and make up with care
A bed without the chamber, which he framed
With his own hands; bear out the massive bed,
And lay upon it seemly coverings,
Fleeces and mantles for his nightly rest."

215

She spake to try her husband; but, displeased,
Ulysses answered thus his virtuous queen: —

220

"O woman, thou hast said unwelcome words.
Who hath displaced my bed? That task were hard
For long-experienced hands, unless some god
Had come to shift its place. No living man,
Even in his prime of years, could easily
Have moved it, for in that elaborate work
There was a mystery; it was I myself
Who shaped it, no one else. Within my court
There grew an olive-tree with full-leaved boughs,
A tall and flourishing tree; its massive stem
Was like a column. Round it I built up
A chamber with cemented stones until
The walls were finished; then I framed a roof

225

230

Above it, and put on the well-glued doors 235
Close fitting. Next I lopped the full-leaved boughs,
And, cutting off the trunk above the root,
Smoothed well the stump with tools, and made of it
A post to bear the couch. I bored the wood
With wimbles, placed on it the frame, and carved 240
The work till it was done, inlaying it
With silver, gold, and ivory. I stretched
Upon it thongs of oxhide brightly dyed
In purple. Now, O wife, I cannot know
Whether my bed remains as then it was, 245
Or whether some one from the root has hewn
The olive trunk, and moved it from its place.”

He spake, and her knees faltered and her heart
Was melted as she heard her lord recount
The tokens all so truly ; and she wept, 250
And rose, and ran to him, and flung her arms
About his neck, and kissed his brow, and said : —

“Ulysses, look not on me angrily,
Thou who in other things art wise above
All other men. The gods have made our lot 255
A hard one, jealous lest we should have passed
Our youth together happily, and thus
Have reached old age. I pray, be not incensed,

Nor take it ill that I embraced thee not
As soon as I beheld thee, for my heart 260
Has ever trembled lest some one who comes
Into this isle should cozen me with words ;
And they who practise fraud are numberless.
The Argive Helen, child of Jupiter,
Would ne'er have listened to a stranger's suit 265
And loved him, had she known that in the years
To come the warlike Greeks would bring her back
To her own land. It was a deity
Who prompted her to that foul wrong. Her thought
Was never of the great calamity 270
Which followed, and which brought such woe on us.
But now, since thou, by tokens clear and true,
Hast spoken of our bed, which human eye
Has never seen save mine and thine, and those
Of one handmaiden only, Actoris, — 275
Her whom my father gave me when I came
To this thy palace, and who kept the door
Of our close chamber, — thou hast won my mind
To full belief, though hard it was to win."

She spake, and he was moved to tears ; he wept 280
As in his arms he held his dearly loved
And faithful wife. As welcome as the land

To those who swim the deep, of whose stout bark
Neptune has made a wreck amidst the waves,
Tossed by the billow and the blast, and few 285
Are those who from the hoary ocean reach
The shore, their limbs all crested with the brine,
These gladly climb the sea-beach, and are safe, —
So welcome was her husband to her eyes.
Nor would her fair white arms release his neck, 290
And there would rosy-fingered Morn have found
Both weeping, but the blue-eyed Pallas planned
That thus it should not be ; she stayed the night
When near its close, and held the golden Morn
Long in the ocean deeps, nor suffered her 295
To yoke her steeds that bring the light to men, —
Lampas and Phaëthon, swift steeds that bear
The Morning on her way. Ulysses then,
The man of forecast, thus bespake his queen : —
“ Not yet, O wife, have we attained the close 300
Of all our labors. One remains which yet
I must achieve, toilsome, and measureless
In difficulty ; for so prophesied
The spirit of Tiresias, on the day
When to the abode of Pluto I went down 305
To ask the seer concerning the return

Of my companions, and my own. But now
Seek we our couch, dear wife, that, softly laid,
We may refresh ourselves with welcome sleep."

Then spake in turn the sage Penelope :

310

"Whenever thou desirest it thy couch
Shall be made ready, since the gods vouchsafe
To bring thee back into thy pleasant home
And to thy native land. But now that thou
Hast spoken of it, and some deity
Is prompting thee, declare what this new task
May be. Hereafter I shall hear of it,
No doubt, nor were it worse to know it now."

315

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :

"Dear wife, why wilt thou ask ? why press me thus ?
Yet will I tell thee truly, nor will keep
Aught from thee, though thou wilt not gladly hear,
Nor I relate. Tiresias bade me pass
Through city after city, till I found
A people who know not the sea, nor eat
Their food with salt, who never yet beheld
The red-prowed galley, nor the shapely oars,
Which are the wings of ships. And this plain sign
He gave, nor will I keep it back from thee,
That when another traveller whom I meet

320

325

330

Shall say it is a winnowing-fan I bear
On my stout shoulder, there he bade me plant
The oar upright in earth, and offer up
To monarch Neptune there a ram, a bull,
And sturdy boar, and then, returning home, 335
Burn hallowed hecatombs to all the gods
Who dwell in the broad heaven, each one in turn.
At last will death come over me, afar
From ocean, such a death as peacefully
Shall take me off in a serene old age, 340
Amid a people prosperous and content.
All this, the prophet said, will come to pass."

And then the sage Penelope rejoined :
" If thus the immortals make thy later age
The happier, there is hope that thou wilt find 345
Escape from evil in the years to come."

So talked they with each other. Meantime went
Eurynomè, attended by the nurse,
And in the light of blazing torches dressed
With soft fresh drapery a bed ; and when 350
Their busy hands had made it full and high
The aged dame withdrew to take her rest
In her own chamber, while Eurynomè,
Who kept the royal bower, upheld a torch

And thither led the pair, and, when they both 355
Were in the chamber, went her way. They took
Their place delighted in the ancient bed.
The prince, the herdsman, and the swineherd ceased
Meantime to tread the dance, and bade the maids
Cease also, and within the palace-rooms, 360
Dark with night's shadow, sought their place of rest.
Then came the time of pleasant mutual talk,
In which that noblest among women spake
Of wrongs endured beneath her roof from those
Who came to woo her, — an insatiate crew, — 365
Who made of beeves and fatlings of the flock
Large slaughter, and drained many a wine-cask dry.
Then nobly born Ulysses told what woes
His valor brought on other men ; what toils
And suffering he had borne ; he told her all, 370
And she, delighted, heard him, nor did sleep
Light on her eyelids till his tale was done.

And first he told her how he overcame
The people of Ciconia ; how he passed
Thence to the rich fields of the race who feed 375
Upon the lotus ; what the Cyclops did,
And how upon the Cyclops he avenged
The death of his brave comrades, whom the wretch

Had pitilessly slaughtered and devoured.
And how he came to Æolus, and found 380
A friendly welcome, and was sent by him
Upon his voyage ; yet 't was not his fate
To reach his native land ; a tempest caught
His fleet, and far across the fishy deep
Bore him away, lamenting bitterly. 385
And how he landed at Telepylus,
Among the Læstrigonians, who destroyed
His ships and warlike comrades, he alone
In his black ship escaping. Then he told
Of Circe, her deceit and many arts, 390
And how he went to Pluto's dismal realm
In his good galley, to consult the soul
Of him of Thebes, Tiresias, and beheld
All his lost comrades and his mother, — her
Who brought him forth, and trained him when a child.
And how he heard the Sirens afterward, 396
And how he came upon the wandering rocks, —
The terrible Charybdis, and the crags
Of Scylla, — which no man had ever passed
In safety ; how his comrades slew for food 400
The oxen of the Sun ; how Jupiter,
The Thunderer, with a bolt of fire from heaven

Smote his swift bark ; and how his gallant crew

All perished, he alone escaped with life.

And how he reached Ogygia's isle, he told,

405

And met the nymph Calypso, who desired

That he would be her husband, and long time

Detained and fed him in her vaulted grot,

And promised that he ne'er should die, nor know

Decay of age, through all the days to come ;

410

Yet moved she not the purpose of his heart.

And how he next through many hardships came

To the Phæacians, and they welcomed him

And honored him as if he were a god,

And to his native country in a bark

415

Sent him with ample gifts of brass and gold

And raiment. As he uttered this last word,

Sleep softly overcame him ; all his limbs

Lay loose in rest, and all his cares were calmed.

The blue-eyed Pallas had yet new designs ;

420

And when she deemed Ulysses was refreshed

With rest and sleep, in that accustomed bed,

She called the Morning, daughter of the Dawn,

To rise from ocean in her car of gold,

And shed her light on men. Ulysses rose

425

From his soft couch, and thus enjoined his spouse : —

“O wife! enough of misery have we borne
Already, — thou in weeping for my long
Unhappy absence, — I for years withheld
By Jupiter and all the other gods 430
From my return to this dear land, although
I pined for home. Now since upon this couch
We take the place so earnestly desired,
Take thou the charge of all that I possess
Here in the palace. For the herds and flocks 435
Which those high-handed suitors have devoured,
I shall seize many others as a spoil;
The rest the Greeks will bring me, till my stalls
Are filled again. I hasten to my farm
Embowered in trees, to greet the aged man 440
My excellent father, who continually
Grieves for me. Prudent as thou art, I give
This charge; a rumor, with the rising sun,
Will quickly go abroad that I have slain
The suitors in the palace. Now withdraw, 445
Thou and thy maidens, to the upper room,
And sit and look not forth, nor ask of aught.”

So spake the chief, and on his shoulders braced
His glorious armor. Then he called his son,
The herdsman, and the swineherd, bidding them 450

To take in hand their weapons. They obeyed,
And, having armed themselves in brass, they threw
The portals open. As they all went forth,
Ulysses led the way. The early light
Was on the earth, but Pallas, shrouding them
In darkness, led them quickly through the town.

BOOK XXIV.

CYLLENIAN Hermes summoned forth the souls
Of the slain suitors. In his hand he bore
The beautiful golden wand, with which at will
He shuts the eyes of men, or opens them
From sleep. With this he guided on their way 5
The ghostly rout ; they followed, uttering
A shrilly wail. As when a flock of bats,
Deep in a dismal cavern, fly about
And squeak, if one have fallen from the place
Where, clinging to each other and the rock, 10
They rested, so that crowd of ghosts went forth
With shrill and plaintive cries. Before them moved
Beneficent Hermes through those dreary ways,
And past the ocean stream they went, and past
Leucadia's rock, the portals of the Sun, 15
And people of the land of dreams, until
They reached the fields of asphodel, where dwell
The souls, the bodiless forms of those who die.

And there they found the soul of Peleus' son,
His friend Patroclus, and the blameless chief 20
Antilochus, and Ajax, who excelled
In stature and in form all other Greeks
Save the great son of Peleus. These were grouped
Around Achilles. Then approached the ghost
Of Agamemnon, Atreus' son ; he seemed 25
In sorrow, and around him others stood,
Who in the palace of Ægisthus met
Their fate and died. The son of Peleus took
The word, and spake to Agamemnon thus : —
“ Atrides, we had thought that Jove, who wields 30
The thunder, favored thee, through all thy years,
Beyond all other men, — thou didst bear rule
Over so many and such valiant men
Upon the plain of Troy, where we of Greece
Endured such sufferings. Yet all too soon 35
The cruel doom of death, which no man born
Of woman can escape, has fallen on thee.
O, if amid the honors of thy sway
That doom had overtaken thee, while yet
In Troy's far realm, then would the assembled Greeks 40
Have built a tomb to thee ! Thou wouldst have left
A heritage of glory to thy son ;

Now hast thou died a most unhappy death."

And then the soul of Agamemnon said :

"Fortunate son of Peleus, godlike chief 45
Achilles, who didst die upon the field
Of Ilium, far from Argos, while there fell
Around thee many of the bravest sons
Of Troy and Greece, who fought for thee, and thou
Wert lying in thy mighty bulk, amid 50
Whirlwinds of dust, forgetful evermore
Of horsemanship. All that day long we fought,
Nor stayed our hands till Jove, to part us, sent
A hurricane. When we had borne thee thence
And brought thee to the fleet, upon a bier 55
We laid thee, pouring o'er thy shapely limbs
Warm water, and anointing them with oil.
Round thee the Achaians stood in tears, hot tears,
And cut their hair away. From ocean's depth
Thy mother, when she heard the tidings, rose 60
With her immortal sea-nymphs. Mournfully
Came o'er the waves the sound of their lament.
Trembled the Greeks with fear, and, rushing forth,
Would have sought refuge in their roomy ships,
If Nestor, wise in ancient lore, and known 65
For counsels ever safe, had not restrained

Their haste, and thus declared his prudent thought : —

“ ‘ Stay, Argives, youths of Greece ; think not of flight !
It is his mother ; from the sea she comes
To her dead son, and brings her deathless nymphs.’ ” 72

“ He spake ; his words withheld the valiant Greeks
From flight. And now around thee came and stood
The daughters of the Ancient of the Deep,
Lamenting bitterly. Upon thy corse
They put ambrosial robes. The Muses nine 75
Bewailed thee with sweet voices, answering
Each other. Then wouldst thou have seen no one
Of all the Argive host with eyes unwet,
The Muses’ song so moved them. Seventeen days
And nights we mourned thee, — both the immortal ones
And mortals. On the eighteenth day we gave 81
Thy body to the fire, and at the pile
Slew many fatling ewes, and many an ox
With crooked horns. In raiment of the gods
The fire consumed thee ’midst anointing oils 85
And honey. Many heroes of our host
In armor and in chariots, or on foot,
Contended round thy funeral pyre in games,
And mighty was the din. And when at length
The fires of Vulcan had consumed thy flesh, 90

We gathered up at morning thy white bones,
Achilles, pouring over them pure wine
And fragrant oils. Thy mother brought a vase
Of gold, which Bacchus gave, she said, the work
Of Vulcan the renowned, and in it now, 95
Illustrious son of Peleus, thy white bones
Are lying, and with thine are mingled those
Of dead Patroclus Menœtiades.
Apart we placed the ashes of thy friend
Antilochus, whom thou didst honor most 100
After the slain Patroclus. O'er all these
The sacred army of the warlike Greeks
Built up a tomb magnificently vast
Upon a cape of the broad Hellespont,
There to be seen, far off upon the deep, 105
By those who now are born, or shall be born
In future years. Thy mother, having first
Prayed to the gods, appointed noble games,
Within the circus, for the Achaian chiefs.
Full often have I seen the funeral rites 110
Of heroes, when the youth, their chieftain dead,
Were girded for the games, and strove to win
The prizes; but I most of all admired
Those which the silver-footed Thetis gave

To mark thy burial, who wert loved by all 115
The immortals. So thou hast not lost by death
Thy fame, Achilles, and among the tribes
Of men thy glory will be ever great ;
But what hath it availed me to have brought
The war on Ilium to an end, since Jove 120
Doomed me to be destroyed on my return,
Slain by Ægisthus and my guilty wife ? ”

So talked they with each other. Now approached
The herald Argus-queller, bringing down
The souls of suitors by Ulysses slain. 125
Both chiefs moved toward them, wondering at the sight.
The soul of Agamemnon, Atreus' son,
Knew well renowned Amphimedon, whose birth
Was from Melanthius, and by whom he once
Was welcomed to his house in Ithaca ; 130
And him the son of Atreus first bespake : —

“ Amphimedon, what sad mischance has brought
You all, who seem like chosen men, and all
Of equal age, into these drear abodes
Beneath the earth ? ’T were hard indeed to find, 135
In a whole city, nobler forms of men.
Has Neptune wrecked you in your ships at sea
With fierce winds and huge waves, or armèd men

Smitten you on the land, while carrying off
Their beeves and sheep, or fighting to defend 140
Your wives and city? Tell me, for I claim
To have been once your guest. Rememberest thou
I lodged in thy own palace when I came
With godlike Menelaus, and besought
Ulysses to unite his gallant fleet 145
To ours, and sail for Troy. A whole month long
Were we in crossing the wide sea, and hard
We found the task to gain as our ally
Ulysses, the destroyer of walled towns."

The soul of dead Amphimedon replied : 150
"Atrides Agamemnon, far renowned,
And king of men, I well remember all
Of which thou speakest; I will now relate,
And truly, how we met our evil end.
We wooed the wife of the long-absent chief 155
Ulysses; she rejected not nor yet
Granted our suit, detested as it was,
But, meditating our destruction, planned
This shrewd device. She laid upon the loom
Within her rooms a web of delicate threads, 160
Ample in length and breadth, and thus she said
To all of us: 'Young princes, who are come

To woo me, — since Ulysses is no more,
My noble husband, — urge me not, I pray,
To marriage, till I finish in the loom — 165
That so my threads may not be spun in vain —
A funeral vesture for the hero-chief
Laertes, when his fatal hour shall come,
With death's long sleep; else some Achaian dame
Might blame me, should I leave without a shroud 170
Him who in life possessed such ample wealth.'
Such were her words, and easily they won
Upon our generous minds. So went she on
Weaving that ample web, and every night
Unravell'd it by torchlight. Three full years 175
She practised thus, and by the fraud deceived
The Grecian youths; but when the hours had brought
The fourth year round, a woman who knew all
Revealed the mystery, and we ourselves
Saw her unravelling the ample web. 180
Thenceforth constrained, and with unwilling hands,
She finished it. And when at length she showed
The vesture she had woven, the broad web
That she had bleached to brightness like the sun's
Or like the moon's, some hostile deity 185
Brought back Ulysses to a distant nook

Of his own fields, and to his swineherd's lodge.
And thither also came in his black ship
His son, returning from the sandy coast
Of Pylos. Thence the twain, when they had planned 190
To slay the suitors, came within the walls
Of the great city ; first Telemachus,
And after him Ulysses, with his guide
The swineherd. He was clad in sordid weeds,
And seemed a wretched beggar, very old, 195
Propped on a staff. In that disguise of rags
None knew him, as he suddenly appeared,
Not even the oldest of us all. Harsh words
And blows we gave him. He endured them all
Awhile with patience, smitten and reviled 200
In his own palace. Moved at length by Jove,
He and his son Telemachus bore off
The shining weapons from the hall, to lie
In a far chamber, and barred all the doors.
Then, prompted by her husband's craft, the queen 205
Proposed a game of archery, with bow
And rings of hoary steel, to all of us
Ill-fated suitors. This drew on our death.
Not one of us could bend that sturdy bow,
None had the strength. But as it passed from us 210

Into Ulysses' hands, we loudly chid
The bearer, and forbade him, but in vain.
Telemachus alone with stern command
Bade him deliver it. When in his hands
The much-enduring chief, Ulysses, took 215
The bow, he drew the string with ease, and sent
A shaft through all the rings. He sprang and stood
Upon the threshold; at his feet he poured
The winged arrows, cast a terrible glance
Around him, and laid King Antinoüs dead, 220
Then sent the fatal shafts at those who stood
Before him; side by side they fell and died.
Some god, we saw, was with them, as they rushed
Upon us mightily, and chased us through
The palace, slaying us on every side; 225
And fearful were the groans of dying men,
As skulls were cloven, and the pavement swam
With blood. Such, Agamemnon, was the fate
By which we perished. Now our bodies lie
Neglected at the palace; for not yet 230
Our kindred, dwelling in our homes, have heard
The tidings, nor have come to cleanse our wounds
From the dark blood, and lay us on the bier
With tears, — such honors as are due the dead."

In turn the soul of Agamemnon spake : 235
“Son of Laertes, fortunate and wise,
Ulysses! thou by feats of eminent might
And valor dost possess thy wife again.
And nobly minded is thy blameless queen,
The daughter of Icarius, faithfully 240
Remembering him to whom she gave her troth
While yet a virgin. Never shall the fame
Of his great valor perish, and the gods
Themselves shall frame, for those who dwell on earth,
Sweet strains in praise of sage Penelope. 245
Not such was she who treacherously slew
The husband of her youth, — she of the house
Of Tyndarus. Her name among mankind
Shall be the hateful burden of a song ;
And great is the dishonor it has brought 250
On women, even the faithful and the good.”

So talked they with each other, standing there
In Pluto's realm beneath the vaulted earth.
Meantime Ulysses, hastening from the town,
Came to the fair fields of Laertes, tilled 255
With care. Laertes, after years of toil,
Acquired them. There his dwelling stood ; a shed
Encircled it, where ate and sat and slept

The servants of the household, who fulfilled
His slightest wish. An old Sicilian dame 260
Was there, who waited, in that distant spot,
On her old master with assiduous care.
And then Ulysses to his followers said : —

“Go into that fair dwelling, and with speed
Slay for our feast the fattest of the swine. 265
I go to prove my father ; I would learn
Whether he knows me when he sees my face,
Or haply knows me not, so long away.”

He spake, and laid his weapons in their hands.
Straight toward the house they went. Ulysses passed 270
Into the fruitful orchard, there to prove
His father. Going down and far within
The garden-plot, he found not Dolius there,
Nor any of the servants, nor his sons.
All were abroad, old Dolius leading them. 275
They gathered thorns to fence the garden-grounds.
There, delving in that fertile spot, around
A newly planted tree, Ulysses saw
His father only, sordidly arrayed
In a coarse tunic, patched and soiled. He wore 280
Patched greaves of bullock's hide upon his thighs,
A fence against the thorns ; and on his hands

Gloves, to protect them from the prickly stems
Of bramble ; and upon his head a cap
Of goatskin. There he brooded o'er his grief. 285
Him when the much-enduring chief beheld,
Wasted with age and sorrow-worn, he stopped
Beside a lofty pear-tree's stem and wept,
And pondered whether he should kiss and clasp
His father in his arms, and tell him all, 290
How he had reached his native land and home,
Or question first and prove him. Musing thus,
It pleased him to begin with sportive words ;
And thus resolved, divine Ulysses drew
Near to his father stooping at his task, 295
And loosening the hard earth about a tree,
And thus the illustrious son accosted him : —

“O aged man ! there is no lack of skill
In tending this fair orchard, which thy care
Keeps flourishing ; no growth is there of fig, 300
Vine, pear, or olive, or of plants that grow
In borders, that has missed thy friendly hand.
Yet let me say, and be thou not displeased,
Thou art ill cared for, burdened as thou art
With years, and squalid, and in mean attire. 305
It cannot be that for thy idleness

Thy master treats thee thus ; nor is there seen
Aught servile in thy aspect, — in thy face
Or stature ; thou art rather like a king ;
Thou seemest one who should enjoy the bath 310
And banquet, and lie soft, — for this befits
Old men like thee. Now say, and tell me true,
Who may thy master be ? whose orchard this
Which thou dost tend ? And, more than this, declare,
For much I long to know, if I am come 315
To Ithaca, as I just now was told
By one who met me as I came, — a man
Not overwise, who would not stop to tell
What I desired to learn, nor bear to hear
My questions, when I asked him if a guest 320
Of mine were living yet in health, or dead
And in the realm of Pluto. Let me speak
Of him, and mark me well, I pray ; I lodged
Once, in my native land, a man who came
Into my house, and never stranger yet 325
More welcome was than he. He was by birth
Of Ithaca, he said, Laertes' son,
And grandson of Arcesias. Him I led
Beneath my roof, and hospitably lodged,
And feasted in the plenty of my home, 330

And gave such gifts as might become a host, —
Seven talents of wrought gold, a silver cup
All over rough with flowers, twelve single cloaks,
Twelve mats, twelve mantles passing beautiful,
And tunics twelve, and, chosen by himself,
Twelve graceful damsels, skilled in household arts.”

335

And then his father answered, shedding tears :
“Thou art indeed, O stranger, in the land
Of which thou dost inquire, but wicked men
And lawless now possess it. Thou hast given
Thy generous gifts in vain ; yet hadst thou found
Ulysses living yet in Ithaca,
Then would he have dismissed thee recompensed
With gifts and liberal cheer, as is the due
Of him who once has been our host. Yet say,
And truly say, how many years have passed
Since thou didst lodge my son, if he it was,
Thy hapless guest, whom, far away from home
And all his friends, the creatures of the deep,
And the foul birds of air, and beasts of prey,
Already have devoured. No mother mourned
His death and wrapped him in his shroud, nor I,
His father ; nor did chaste Penelope,
His consort nobly dowered, bewail the man

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She loved upon his bier with eyes dissolved 355
In tears, as fitting was, — an honor due
To those who die. Now, further, truly tell,
For I would learn, what is thy name, and whence
Thou comest, from what tribe, thy city where,
And who thy parents. Where is the good ship 360
At anchor which has brought thee and thy friends?
Or hast thou landed from another's bark,
Which put thee on the shore and left the isle?"

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:

"I will tell all and truly. I am come 365
From Alybas; a stately dwelling there
Is mine, Apheidas is my father, son
Of royal Polypemon, and my name
Eperitus. Some deity has warped
My course astray from the Sicanian coast, 370
And brought me hitherward against my will.
My bark lies yonder, stationed by the field
Far from the city. This is the fifth year
Since parting with me thy Ulysses left
My native land for his, ill-fated man! 375
Yet there were flights of birds upon the right
Of happy presage as he sailed, and I
Dismissed him cheerfully, and cheerfully

He went. We hoped that we might yet become
Each other's guests, exchanging princely gifts." 380

He spake, and a dark cloud of sorrow came
Over Laertes. With both hands he grasped
The yellow dust, and over his white head
Shed it with piteous groans. Ulysses felt
His heart within him melted; the hot breath 385

Rushed through his nostrils as he looked upon
His well-beloved father, and he sprang
And kissed and clasped him in his arms, and said: —

“Nay, I am he, my father; I myself
Am he of whom thou askest. I am come 390
To mine own country in the twentieth year.

But calm thyself, refrain from tears, and grieve
No more, and let me tell thee, in a word,
I have slain all the suitors in my halls,
And so avenged their insolence and crimes.” 395

And then Laertes spake again, and said:
“If now thou be Ulysses, my lost son,
Give some plain token, that I may believe.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus:
“First, then, behold with thine own eyes the scar 400
Which once the white tusk of a forest boar
Inflicted on Parnassus, when I made

The journey thither, by thy own command,
And by my gracious mother's, to receive
Gifts which her father, King Autolycus, 405
Once promised, when he came to Ithaca.
And listen to me further ; let me name
The trees which in thy well-tilled orchard grounds
Thou gavest me ; I asked them all of thee,
When by thy side I trod the garden walks, 410
A little boy. We went among the trees,
And thou didst name them. Of the pear thirteen,
And of the apple ten thou gavest me,
And forty fig-trees ; and thou didst engage
To give me fifty rows of vines, each row 415
Of growth to feed the winepress. Grapes are there
Of every flavor when the hours of Jove
Shall nurse them into ripeness from on high."

He spake ; a trembling seized the old man's heart
And knees, as he perceived how true were all 420
The tokens which Ulysses gave. He threw
Round his dear son his arms. The hardy chief,
Ulysses, drew him fainting to his heart.
But when the old man's strength revived, and calm
Came o'er his spirit, thus he spake again : — 425

" O father Jove, assuredly the gods

Dwell on the Olympian height, since we behold
The arrogant suitors punished for their crimes.
Yet much I fear lest all the Ithacans
Throng hither, and send messages to rouse
Against us all the Cephallenian states."

430

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus :
"Take courage ; let no thought like that disturb
Thy mind ; but let us hasten to the house.
Telemachus is there, with whom I sent
The herdsman and the swineherd, bidding them
Make ready with all speed our evening meal."

435

Thus talked the twain, and toward the dwelling took
Their way, and entering the commodious rooms
They found Telemachus, and by his side
The herdsman and the keeper of the swine,
Dividing for the feast the plenteous meats,
And mingling the dark wine. Then to the bath
Came the Sicilian dame, and ministered
To the large-souled Laertes, and with oil
Anointed him, and wrapped a sumptuous cloak
About him. Pallas gave the monarch's limbs
An ampler roundness ; taller to the sight
He stood, and statelier. As he left the bath,
His son beheld with wonder in his eyes,

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So like a god Laertes seemed, and thus
Ulysses said to him in winged words : —

“Some one among the ever-living gods
Hath surely shed, O father, on thy form
And aspect all this grace and majesty.”

455

The sage Laertes answered : “Father Jove,
And Pallas and Apollo! would that I
Were now as when I took the citadel
Of Nericus, the strongly built, beside
The sea-shore of Epirus, leading on
My Cephallenians! With such strength as then,
Armed for the fray, I would have met and fought
The suitors in the palace yesterday,
And struck down many lifeless in the hall,
And greatly would thy spirit have rejoiced.”

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465

So talked they with each other. When they all
Ceased from their task, and saw their meal prepared,
They sat them down in order on the thrones
And seats, and each put forth his hand and shared
The banquet. Now approached an aged man,
Dolius, attended by his sons, who came
Weary with toil, for the Sicilian dame,
The nurse who reared them, went and summoned them, —
She who in his late age with faithful care

470

Cherished the father. These, when at the board 475
They saw Ulysses, and knew who he was,
Stopped in the hall astonished. Instantly
Ulysses called to them with friendly words : —

“Sit at the board, old man ; let none of you
Give way to blank amazement. Know that we, 480
Though keen our appetite for this repast,
Have waited long, expecting your return.”

He spake, and Dolius sprang with outstretched arms
And seized Ulysses by the hand, and kissed
The wrist ; and thus in winged words he spake : — 485

“Dear master ! since thou art returned to us,
Who longed and yet expected not to see
Thy face again, — since some divinity
Has led thee hither, — hail ! and great may be
Thy happiness, and may the gods bestow 490
All blessings on thee ! But declare, for I
Would gladly know, if sage Penelope
Have heard the tidings yet of thy return,
Or must we send them by a messenger.”

Ulysses, the sagacious, answered thus : 495
“My aged friend, she knows already all.
Why wouldst thou take that care upon thyself ? ”

He spake, and Dolius on a polished seat

Sat down, but round the great Ulysses came
His sons, and welcomed him with loving words, 500
And hung upon his hand, and then they took
Their places by their father. So they sat
Beneath Laertes' roof, and banqueted.

Now through the city meantime swiftly ran
The rumor that the suitors all had met 505
A bloody death. No sooner had men heard
The tidings than they came with cries and moans
Before the palace, moving to and fro.
Each carried forth his dead, and gave to each
His funeral rites, except to those who came 510
From distant cities; these they put on board
Swift-sailing galleys of the fishermen,
That they might bear them home. And then they came
Sorrowing together in the market-place.

There, when the assembly now was full, arose 515
Eupeithes and addressed them. In his heart
Was sorrow, that could never be consoled,
For his slain son Antinoös, who was first
To fall before Ulysses. Weeping rose
The father, and harangued the assembly thus: — 520

“Great things, indeed, my friends, hath this man done
For us Achaians. Many valiant men

He gathered in his ships and led abroad,
 And lost his gallant ships, and lost his men ;
 And now, returning, he has put to death 525
 The best of all the Cephallenian race.
 Come, then, and ere he find a safe retreat
 In Pylos, or in hallowed Elis, where
 The Epeians rule, pursue him ; endless shame
 Will be our portion else, and they who live 530
 In future years will hear of our disgrace.
 If we avenge not on these men of blood
 The murder of our sons and brothers, life
 Will not be sweet to me, and I would go
 At once, and gladly, down among the dead. 535
 Rise, then, and fall upon them ere they flee.”

So spake he, weeping ; and the Greeks were moved
 With pity as they heard him. Now appeared
 The herald Medon and the sacred bard,
 As, rising from the sleep of night, they left 540
 The palace of Ulysses. They stood forth
 Amid the multitude, who all beheld
 With wonder. Then sagacious Medon spake : —

“Give ear, ye men of Ithaca, and know
 That not without the approval of the gods 545
 Ulysses hath done this. I saw, myself,

One of the immortals taking part with him,
In all things like to Mentor. Now the god
Standing before Ulysses strengthened him
For combat, and now drove the routed band 550
Of suitors through the hall; in heaps they fell."

He spake, and all who heard were pale with fear.
The aged hero, Halitherses, son
Of Mastor, then came forward; he alone
Knew what was past and what was yet to come, 555
And, wisely judging, to the assembly said:—

"Hear now my words, ye men of Ithaca.
Through your own wrong all this has come to pass.
To me ye would not hearken, nor obey
When Mentor, shepherd of the people, spake. 560
On the mad doings of your sons ye put
No curb, nor checked the guilty insolence
That dared to waste the substance and insult
The consort of a man of eminent worth,
Who, so they thought, would nevermore return. 565
Now be it as I counsel; let us not
Go forth to draw down evil on our heads."

He spake; but more than half the assembly rushed
Abroad with shouts; the others kept their place
Together. Ill the augur's speech had pleased 570

The most. Eupeithes had persuaded them.
They flew to arms, and when they had put on
The glittering brass, they mustered in close ranks
Before the spacious city. At their head
Eupeithes led them on, who madly deemed 575
Himself the avenger of his slaughtered son.
Yet he from that encounter nevermore
Was to return; his fate o’ertook him there.

Then Pallas thus addressed Saturnian Jove :
“Our Father, son of Saturn, king of kings, 580
Tell me, I pray, the purpose of thy heart
Yet unrevealed. Shall there be cruel war
And deadly combats, or wilt thou ordain
That these shall henceforth dwell in amity?”

And cloud-compelling Jove made answer thus : 585
“My child, why ask me? Was it not with thee
A cherished purpose, that, returning home,
Ulysses amply should avenge himself
Upon the suitors? Do, then, as thou wilt.
Yet this, as the most fitting, I advise. 590
Now that the great Ulysses has avenged
His wrongs, let there be made a faithful league
With oaths, and let Ulysses ever reign;
And we will cause the living to forget

Their sons and brothers slain, and all shall dwell 595
In friendship as they heretofore have dwelt,
And there shall be prosperity and peace.”

He spake, and eager as she was before,
Encouraged by his words, the goddess plunged
Down from the summits of the Olympian mount. 600
Now when they all had feasted to the full,
The much-enduring chief, Ulysses, said :
“Go, one of you, and see if they are near.”

He spake ; a son of Dolius at his word
Went forth, and, coming to the threshold, stopped. 605
He saw them all at hand, and instantly
Bespake Ulysses thus, with winged words :
“They are upon us ; we must arm at once.”

He spake ; they rose, and quickly were in arms.
Four were Ulysses and his friends, and six 610
The sons of Dolius. Old Laertes then,
And Dolius, put on armor with the rest,
Gray-headed as they were, for now their aid
Was needed. When they all had clad themselves
In shining brass, they threw the portals wide 615
And sallied forth, Ulysses at their head.

Now Pallas, daughter of almighty Jove,
Drew near them. She had taken Mentor's form

And Mentor's voice. The much-enduring chief,
Ulysses, saw her and rejoiced, and said 620
To his beloved son, Telemachus : —

“Now wilt thou, of thyself, Telemachus,
Bethink thee, when thou minglest in the fray
That tries men's valor, not to cast disgrace
Upon thy forefathers, — a race renowned 625
For manly daring over all the earth.”

And thus discreet Telemachus replied :
“Nay, if thou wilt, my father, thou shalt see
That by no lack of valor shall I cast,
As thou hast said, dishonor on thy race.” 630

Laertes heard them, and rejoiced, and said :
“O what a day for me, ye blessed gods,
Is this! With what delight I see my son
And grandson rivals on the battle-field.”

And then the blue-eyed Pallas, drawing near 635
Laertes, said : “Son of Arcesias, loved
By me beyond all others of my friends,
Pray to Jove's blue-eyed daughter, and to Jove,
And brandish thy long spear, and send it forth.”

So Pallas spake, and breathed into his frame 640
Strength irresistible. The aged chief
Prayed to the daughter of almighty Jove,

And brandished his long spear and sent it forth.
It smote Eupheithes on the helmet's cheek.
The brass stayed not the spear, the blade passed through,
And heavily Eupheithes fell to earth, 646
His armor clashing round round him as he fell.
Then rushed Ulysses and his valiant son
Forward, the foremost of their band, and smote
Their foes with swords and lances double-edged, 650
And would have struck them down to rise no more,
If Pallas, daughter of the god who bears
The ægis, had not with a mighty voice
Commanded all the combatants to cease : —
 “Stay, men of Ithaca ; withhold your hands 655
From deadly combat. Part, and shed no blood.”
 So Pallas spake, and they grew pale with awe,
And fear-struck ; as they heard her words they dropped
Their weapons all upon the earth. They fled
Townward as if for life, while terribly 660
The much-enduring chief Ulysses raised
His voice, and shouted after them, and sprang
Upon them as an eagle darts through air.
Then Saturn's son sent down a bolt of fire ;
It fell before his blue-eyed daughter's feet, 665
And thus the goddess to Ulysses called : —

“Son of Laertes, nobly born and wise,
Ulysses, hold thy hand ; restrain the rage
Of deadly combat, lest the god who wields
The thunder, Saturn’s son, be wroth with thee.”

670

She spake, and gladly he obeyed ; and then
Pallas, the child of ægis-bearing Jove,
Plighted, in Mentor’s form with Mentor’s voice
A covenant of peace between the foes.

END OF VOL. II.

THE ODYSSEY